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**A MAN IS FOR
CHRISTMAS
NOT FOR
LIFE**

Rachel Morris
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**THE
PANIC
PARTY
DRESS**

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**JONATHAN
MEADES LANDS
ON PLANET
HOLLYWOOD**

MAGAZINE

Chicken Shed
v Teletubbies

Bosnia shoot-out at dawn

SAS raid nets war crimes suspects

FROM TOM WALKER IN STARI VITZ
AND TOM RHODES IN WASHINGTON

SAS TROOPS joined Dutch marines in pre-dawn raids in central Bosnia yesterday, arresting two Croats suspected of war crimes, one of whom was injured in a shoot-out in his bedroom.

The operation, which was planned over several months, belied Nato's claim that war criminals are only arrested during the course of normal duties for troops of the Bosnian Stabilisation Force.

SAS troops spearheaded the raids. The Dutch soldiers had been in Bosnia less than a week after undergoing special training in America.

Nato sources in Sarajevo said yesterday's arrests could be the prelude to an operation to seize "big fish" war crimes suspects still at large, the wartime Serb leaders Radovan Karadzic and Ratko Mladic. Dr Karadzic is in the Serb stronghold of Pale and General Mladic is in Han Pijesak in eastern Bosnia.

There are about 5,000 British troops involved in the Nato-led peacekeeping operation. The Americans have about 8,400 soldiers in Bosnia and another 700 in Croatia. The Dutch have 1,000 in Bosnia.

The arrests caused turmoil in central Bosnia, where relations between Croats and Muslims have deteriorated sharply in recent months. In the ruined former Muslim-dominated village of Ahmici, an angry crowd of about 100 Croats surrounded the hillside villa of Vlado Kupreskic, the 35-year-old suspect injured in the raid.

A mile away, on the road into the region's main Croatian town, Vitez, another mob faced a Dutch military cordon. The house of the second suspect, Anto Furundzija, was inaccessible.

Mr Kupreskic's distraught wife, Ljubica, 35, speaking by telephone, said troops had thrown stun grenades through the balcony window of their home at about 1am. The couple awoke in a haze of smoke and noise. She said all

she could remember was that shots were being pumped into her husband who writhed in agony on the floor.

"There's blood all over the place, come and look," she screamed. "My husband is no criminal, he plays guitar."

Major Peter Clarke, a Nato spokesman in Sarajevo, said Mr Kupreskic had opened fire with an automatic rifle on the troops in his bedroom and was shot in the shoulder, arm and leg.

Mr Furundzija apparently surrendered without a struggle, and was on his way to The Hague as news of the raids became known in Sarajevo. Mr Kupreskic was treated at a Dutch military hospital before he too was taken to The Hague.

Both men have been linked with the massacre of Muslims in Ahmici in April 1993, which claimed 103 lives, 33 of them women and children. Many of the victims were burned alive as Croats belonging to a notorious paramilitary band known as "The Jokers", razed the village. Mr Furundzija, was allegedly the leader of the band.

President Clinton announced yesterday that American troops would remain in Bosnia beyond the June deadline for Nato withdrawal, prompting immediate protests from Republicans on Capitol Hill. The decision, which had been anticipated for months, came days before a scheduled 12-hour visit by Mr Clinton to the US contingent in Bosnia.

Privately, the White House conceded that US forces would remain in the Balkans for several years. The President said he would set no further deadline for withdrawal. "The progress in Bosnia is unmistakable, but it is not yet irreversible," he said. "We have learnt the hard way in this century that Europe's stability and America's security are joined. If we pull out before the job is done, Bosnia will almost certainly fall back into a war every bit as violent as the last one."

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The blaze at the Upper East Side mansion — a neo-classical 19th century building listed as "not

Rapping knuckles, not gifts, this season of goodwill

In this season of goodwill it is all but obligatory in the Commons Chamber to preface every question with the phrase "in this season of goodwill". The MP then goes on to insult whomever he or she is addressing.

But if it fails to warm the politician's heart, the onset of Christmas does at least loosen the tongue. A frank aside at Questions to the President of the Board of Trade yesterday told us more about Margaret Beckett's attitude to Europe than seven months of bland official press releases.

Her Tory Shadow, John Redwood, had complained

that Mrs Beckett used to be anti-Europe, but now toed the pro-European line. Dennis Skinner barked: "Yer did the opposite. Yer still a Johnny-come-lately." Brushing aside her briefing, Mrs Beckett smiled: "I met a man at dinner recently who told me he'd been a Eurosceptic since 1992. I replied, 'Too late!'"

The United Kingdom's economy was now "bound up", she added, with Europe. We "must make the best we can't afford".

So now we know. The President of the Board of Trade thinks the European Union is a bad thing from

which it is now too late to withdraw. A defensible point of view — but a slightly unexpected one from the person Mr Blair has put in charge of British trade, commerce and industry.

Dressed in an eye-catching white trouser-suit with white high-heels — which in this season of goodwill we might describe as equally suitable for a caravanning barbecue — Mrs Beckett was as cool as

ever. Not so her bizarre sidekick, Ian McCartney, Minister for Competitiveness. Mr McCartney responds to every question with a hail of unintelligible gruff, belligerent squeaking noises like a chubby, macho Glasgow mouse.

Known to colleagues as Big Mac, he is shorter than Mrs Beckett and about half the

height of his lanky fellow-minister, John Battle. McCartney's head seems to sit straight on top of his ribcage with no intervening neck. The Opposition doubts him Teletubby but I have always found these creatures more thoughtful and articulate. In this season of goodwill we may call it unsurprising that he was depated yesterday to answer questions on skills-shortages.

Answering on renewable energy, another minister, gaunt, bearded, distracted

John Battle — buried about "offshore wind projects", presumably a reference to the

Paymaster General and sites of special scientific interest — presumably a reference to Mr McCartney.

Colin Pickthall (Lab, W Lancs), wondered whether we should not, rather, be looking at Danish models — an idea that excited a good deal of interest on the Tory benches. Pickthall stammered "perhaps that, too".

"In this season of goodwill," remarked Opposition spokeswoman Cheryl Gillan, in a festive pink vest, to young Nigel Griffiths, Consumer Affairs Minister and team-leader in Gordon Brown's Junior Squad, "the only wrapping

this minister will be getting for Christmas will be across his knuckles."

As I left, the House Leader, Ann Taylor, walked in, sporting the most brutal haircut imaginable. Mrs Taylor, a high-powered apparatchik, brings an imaginative approach to her conciliatory role as Business Manager in Chief and has taken to heckling Opposition Spokesmen from her place on the Front Bench.

In this season of goodwill, it is worth remarking that once you have imagined Taylor applying electrodes to your gonads you will never see her in quite the same way again.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Driving licences to carry photos

Photographs will be included on driving licences from next summer, the Government announced last night. The scheme, ordered by the European Union, will be phased in and will not affect licence holders immediately.

New drivers will be issued with the photocards on passing their test but motorists driving now will change only when they need to update details. It will not be compulsory to carry them and the Department of Transport says they will not become identity cards.

United's gift

Manchester United yesterday gave £100,000 to help a school that provided two of its youth players to become a specialist sports college. Kirk Hilton, 16, and Daniel Higginbotham, 18, were educated at Ashton-on-Mersey School, Trafalgar, one of 33 new specialist colleges announced yesterday by the Government.

Vets attack ban

Veterinary surgeons described the Government's decision to ban beef on the bone as a "panic overreaction" to a risk so small as to be almost nonexistent. The British Veterinary Association said the Tory policy of complacency was in danger of being replaced by one of ill-considered, knee-jerk responses by Labour.

Rail fares up

Passengers on Connex South Central between London and East and West Croydon stations face a 10 per cent rise in fares. Those on Connex South Eastern will go up by an average of 5.3 per cent, while fares on Connex South Central's south London and Sussex Coast routes will rise by an average of 4.5 per cent.

Training deal

Richard Branson's Virgin Trains group yesterday announced a partnership between the private sector and a trade union to avert a huge potential shortage of drivers. An agreement between Virgin Trains and Aslef, the train drivers' union, will set up the first purpose-built training centre since privatisation of the railways.

Carling wins

Will Carling, the former England rugby union captain, was awarded undisclosed damages and costs against the Daily Mail yesterday, which had falsely accused him of being a stalker and a "telephone pest". A statement read out in Nottingham Crown Court said the newspaper wished to apologise to Mr Carling.

Censor chief

Andreas Whittam Smith, founder editor of The Independent, was yesterday appointed chairman of the British Board of Film Classification. He committed himself to a reform of the beleaguered institution, which has been widely criticised for its lax attitude to violence and sex and its secrecy over rulings.

Thomas bailed

Mickey Thomas, the former Manchester United and Welsh international soccer player, was charged yesterday with having unlawful sex with an underage girl. Thomas, 43, of Michdrie, near Colwyn Bay, north Wales, was arrested on Monday and bailed to appear before magistrates in Abergavenny on January 22.

CORRECTIONS

□ A report (June 20) of an inquiry into the case of Peter Winship, a paranoid schizophrenic found guilty of the manslaughter of his father, should not have suggested physical abuse by him. No such abuse was ever established, and Mr Winship often confused his father with another adult figure in his life. □ The Government's ban on the sale of beef on the bone (report, December 4) will not affect Bovril.

Smith accused of U-turn on £1m for British Museum

BY DALYA ALBERGE AND PHILIP WEBSTER

CHRIS SMITH was accused last night of a climbdown after promising the cash-strapped British Museum another £1 million on condition that it did not introduce admission charges next year.

In a carrot-and-stick offer, the Culture Secretary told the museum that the money was dependent upon it devising an action plan to cut costs dramatically, streamlining its cumbersome "bureaucracy" and generating more income to supplement its public subsidy.

His proposal was immediately attacked by Francis Maude, the Shadow Culture Secretary: "Last year Labour said they were in favour of admission charges, but would not fund them. Last month they claimed they had no influence over whether museums choose to introduce admission charges."

"Now the Government says

that it is to provide an extra £1 million to the British Museum on the condition that it does not introduce admission charges." He said Mr Smith was "blundering from one U-turn to the next".

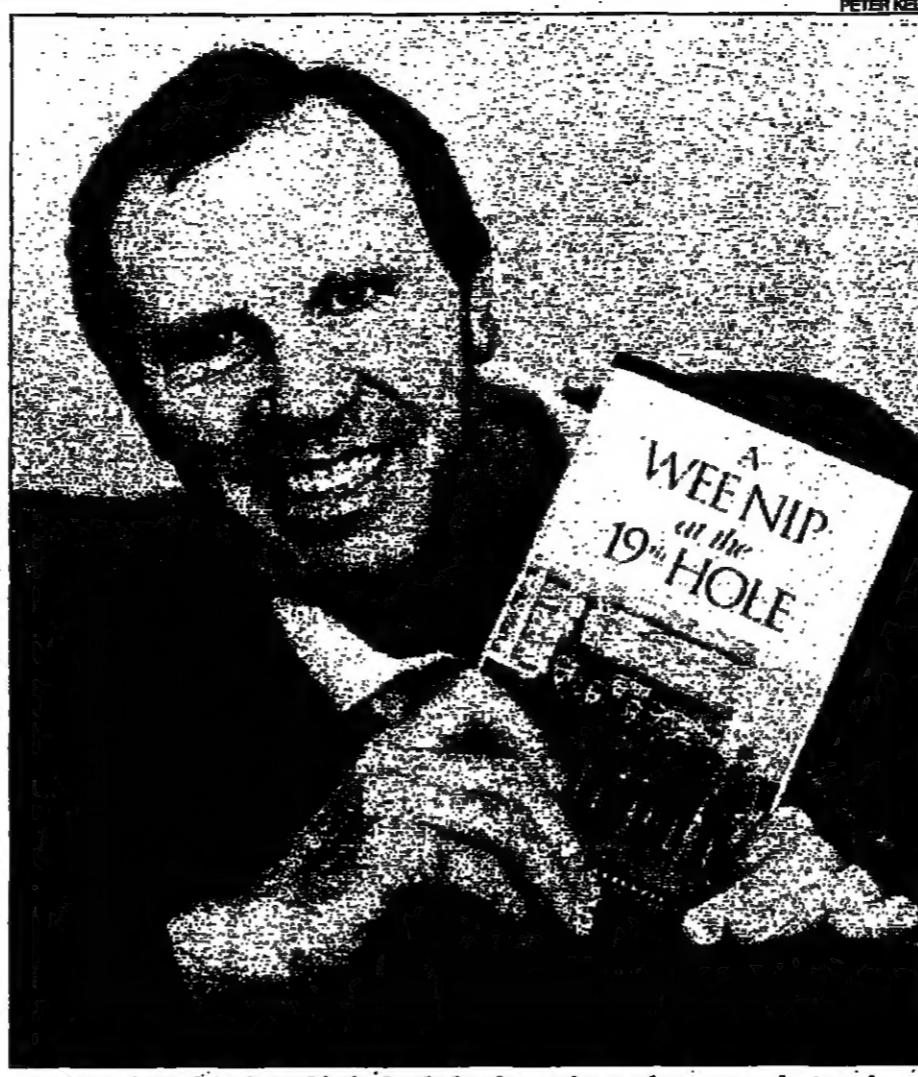
Sources close to Mr Smith said that he had made his surprise move to stop the museum taking "irrevocable" decisions on charging. In effect, Mr Smith was using delaying tactics, avoiding any rash decisions, at least until the publication of the Government's museums review next year.

Sir Hugh Leggatt, the former Museums and Galleries Commissioner, welcomed the proposal. Acknowledging that £1 million would not go far, he said: "It's a start. As soon as one has made a start, one can move forward. It would be awful if he had slammed the door in the BM's faces, but he hasn't." He felt that Mr

Smith's "tough-talking" was just what museums needed. The art world expressed anger that more money for the British Museum meant less for others. Three of the nation's most prominent institutions came in for particular punishment. The National Heritage Memorial Fund complained that they had suffered a drastic loss of £3 million while English Heritage was £2 million poorer.

The British Film Institute said it had been badly hit by a £1 million decrease.

□ The Arts Council is facing its "worst revenue crisis" of recent decades, the council's outgoing chairman, the Earl of Gowrie, warned last night. He told peers that while the Arts Council had enjoyed "a capital feast" from National Lottery funds, it had, at the same time, suffered "a revenue famine" as its grant-in-aid was cut.



Richard Mackenzie's with the book that is proving such a success in America

Aitken finds comfort in evangelical church

BY PHILIP DELVES BROUGHTON

JONATHANAITKEN has used his first public utterance since the collapse of his libel action against *The Guardian* to reveal himself as an evangelical Christian.

In a man not previously known for his saintliness, the conversion is Damascene, even more startling than Michael Portillo's sudden need to be loved.

The former Conservative Cabinet minister attributes his salvation to Holy Trinity Brompton, the London church at the heart of the Church of England's powerful evangelical movement, which includes the topless model Samantha Fox in its congregation.

In the Christmas issue of *The Spectator* magazine, Mr Aitken, who was once a churchwarden at St Margaret's, in Westminster, writes of his sympathy with the more grisly moments of the Nativity story.

A young boy in hospital in Dublin for a serious tubercular condition, he says: "I was captivated by the cheerful Christmas symbols of heavenly hosts, angels, shepherds, wise men and stars in the East."

"But I later discovered a deeper message from the moments of pain and anxiety in the early stages of the Nativity saga and, more im-

portantly, from the way in which they were healed."

His recent plight was eased by the realisation that it was nothing when compared to the tough deal handed out to the newborn by Herod, or Joseph and Mary's night in the Bethlehem cowshed.

His language has lost nothing since he spoke of "the trusty sword of truth". He says the terms "spiritual hunger" and "greater spiritual awareness" were "sprinkled across the media like confetti", becoming "a cornucopia of clichés" at the time of the death of Diana, Princess of Wales.

Evangelical Christianity, its

prayer cells, fellowships and teaching courses have provided the virtuals for his own spiritual hunger.

He has joined the half a million or so who have taken the Holy Trinity Brompton Alpha course in Christianity. "Evidently," he writes, "I am not the only prisoner of past mistakes to have found this course helpful."

Mr Aitken is not, however, unaware that some might find his new-found faith surprising: "Belonging as I do to the Church Rebuilt wing of Anglicanism, I am suspicious of foxhole conversions through 'easy believism', and cautious about accepting adversity as the gateway to a deeper faith."

His self-justification comes in the line from the Psalms about using one's vale of misery as a well, because the reward for the redeemed and penitent is love, joy and all sorts of other good things.

Mr Aitken's piece rises in a crescendo of allusions to a final clarion call: "So long as faith in Our Lord Jesus Christ is one's companion in life's dark valleys, then even a painful Christmas can still be a joyful Christmas."

Mr Aitken yesterday declined to add anything more to what he had written.

Major riled by Hague's apology for ERM entry

BY PHILIP WEBSTER, POLITICAL EDITOR

JOHN MAJOR delivered a sideswipe at William Hague yesterday over the Tory leader's apology for Britain's entry to the European exchange-rate mechanism when Mr Major was Chancellor in 1990.

He also openly disagreed with Mr Hague's decision to rule out a single currency for ten years.

Mr Hague was hailed by the Tory Right after saying sorry over the ERM at the Tory conference in October. But Mr Major, who has tried to refrain from any criticism of his successor, allowed his irritation to show in an interview with *The Spectator*.

After hitting out at the "wilder extravagances" of some Tories over Europe the former Prime Minister said

he was glad he had never said sorry about the ERM. Politicians apologising was silly.

He mocked Tony Blair for making apologies, asking whether Uriah Heep was running the country. "Look at Blair, apologising to the Irish — next time he will probably apologise to the Indians," he said.

Asked if he thought Mr Hague was sensible to rule out a single currency for ten years, he replied: "I would not have ruled it out for ten years for the foreseeable future, perhaps, but not necessarily ten years."

Mr Major said he believed that the country, while lukewarm about Europe, was not fanatically anti. "Some of the wilder extravagances of members of my party were

for the birds. There were some people who made the whole Tory party seem mad."

He also uttered his fiercest attack since the election on the Government. "Labour lied to the middle classes. They made them all these promises of help and now, every day, they kick them in the pants." Gordon Brown's wholly unnecessary Budget was a disgraceful raid on pension funds. A higher rate of council tax and the abolition of Tessa's stupid and incredibly vindictive...

"I have calculated that Labour is costing each middle-class family £700 a month. I suppose that they are being macho. I suppose that is why they refuse to bow to parliamentary opinion."

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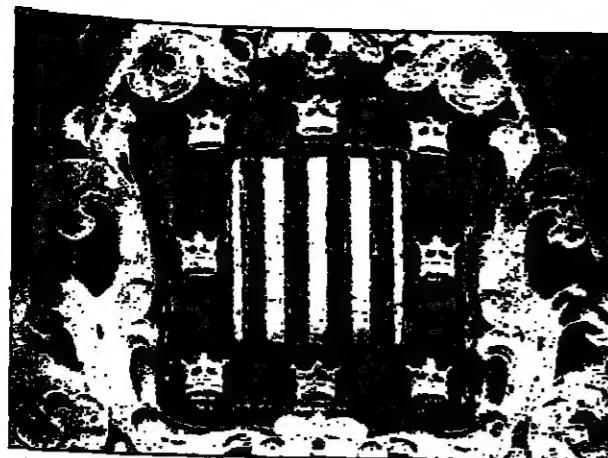
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COLLEGE

College spooked by ghost of bursar past



The Peterhouse crest, above, and the college, below



Peterhouse considers exorcism of restless suicide victim who stalks the fellows' dining room, report

Adrian Lee and John O'Leary

CAMBRIDGE University's oldest college has turned to the Church for help in ridding itself of the restless spirit of a former bursar who took his life more than two centuries ago.

The tortured soul of Francis Dawes, who hanged himself from a bell rope at Peterhouse in 1789, is believed to be responsible for several ghostly sightings this year in the college's oak-panelled Combination Room.

Two butlers, Matthew Speller and Paul Davies, said they watched the ghost move slowly across the room before disappearing near the staircase where Dawes's body is thought to have been discovered. In the most recent incident, Andrew Murison, the current senior bursar, heard a repetitive knocking late at night and was enveloped by an eerie chill, although a large fire in the room was still glowing.

The Rev Dr Graham Ward, a

theologian and Dean of Peterhouse, has reported the haunting to the diocese of Ely and a requiem Mass may now be held to exorcise the spirit if it continues to disrupt college life. "It would be difficult because all the fellows and domestic staff would have to attend and, inevitably, some would not want to, but it might come to that," he said.

"Ghosts don't fit into any theology of the resurrection I know about, but I saw the absolute terror on the faces of those two butlers, so I don't doubt that something happened. In a college full of unreliable people, they are completely reliable."

Dr Murison said: "There is no reason to believe the butlers. They are very level-headed, although some of the fellows no doubt think they have been at the Master's port. As far as I am concerned, I did feel a sense of foreboding, but the ghost has not done any harm."

Matthew Speller, a college butler, outside the Combination Room, where he says he and a colleague saw the ghost and felt a sudden chill

think it is unlikely we would get all 45 fellows together for an exorcism — they are a cynical lot."

Dr Murison had stopped off in the Combination Room, where the fellows of the college hold meetings and eat lunch, when he felt the presence of his predecessor. "It was about 11.45 and, because I had missed supper, I went to get some fruit to pick back to my room. I was about to leave when I heard a banana when there was a knocking."

"I thought it must be the central heating coming on, but the sound came from beneath the window where there are no pipes or radiator. I had already noticed how cold it was, which I thought was strange because the embers in the fire were still red."

Dawes, who is buried in the neighbouring churchyard of Little St Mary's, committed suicide after blaming himself for the controversial election of Francis Barnes as

Master of Peterhouse. The election, overseen by the bursar, was marked by skullduggery and resulted in a highly unpopular victor. Historical documents note that hundreds of people attended the funeral of Dawes, a respected classicist, who was in his 60s when he died and bequeathed £100 to his beloved college.

The story of the Peterhouse haunting is told in today's edition of *The Times Higher Education Supplement*. So far, there is no sign of any malevolent intention by the ghost, which has become the talk of the college.

The butlers were adamant yesterday that there had been a visitation. The first sighting, in April, happened while both were serving dinner.

Mr Speller, 22, said: "We went into the Combination Room to get some plates before taking them up the spiral staircase. We were chaf-

ting away when we both saw something move slowly across the room, about 15ft from the middle to the window. I just looked at Paul and said, 'Did you see that?'

Both men described the ghost as human-sized, but said it was impossible to distinguish features or determine its sex as it travelled about it off the ground. In the dimly lit room, it stood out brightly and, like the bursar, the butlers both said they felt a sudden chill.

Mr Davies said: "I was not frightened but, at the same time, I did not want to get too close."

On another occasion they felt sufficiently alarmed to interrupt a dinner to inform the Dean. Mr Davies, 26, attempted to walk towards the apparition, but it did not waver, taking the same path to the window.

The stone staircase winds 40 steps and two floors to the belfry where the unfortunate bursar ends

his life. The butlers have also heard rhythmic knocking which appeared to move around the paneling and, on another occasion, Paul Cooke, the senior butler, noticed a solid wooden door shaking violently. His strenuous efforts to hold it shut made no difference and, when the vibrations stopped and he was able to open it, there was no one on the other side.

Peterhouse is the ideal setting for a ghost story. Founded in 1284, it still occupies some of the original buildings. Dinners and meetings of the governing body are conducted by candlelight.

Two previous exorcisms have been carried out in the college. In the 18th century, a poltergeist was removed from a student's room and, more recently, a former Dean carried out a ceremony because of the appearance of a dark presence in a corner of the old courtyard overlooking a graveyard.

Tests for cancer on Duchess of York negative

By JOANNA BALE

THE Duchess of York was given a clean bill of health yesterday after tests, including cancer checks, on a lump under her arm.

A spokeswoman from her office said: "She is very relieved. This was a cautionary sign that she needs to slow down and rest because she is very tired."

A senior consultant at the Lister Hospital in central London is believed to have conducted a biopsy on the lump, which involves taking a sample of tissue to check whether it is a benign or malignant growth.

The Duchess, 38, was said to have discovered the lump and called her GP to her Berkshire home on Sunday. The GP referred the Duchess, who complained of feeling rundown, to the Lister, a renowned cancer hospital, which she attended for an hour on Tuesday night.

She has recently completed a busy schedule of charity events, including a Christmas concert for Children in Crisis at the London Docklands Arena and a visit to Great Ormond Street Hospital for Children. She has had an estimated 80 engagements in the past year and has travelled to America and back three times in the past month.

On Monday, despite her health concerns, the Duchess felt she could not pull out of a full day's filming and a photocall for a WeightWatchers advertising campaign. Her friends have expressed fears that the pressures over her personal finances and her role in the Royal Family may have contributed to her condition.

Last night the Duchess was said to be celebrating the news of her health check while on holiday at the Tuscan villa of her friend Count Gallo della Gherardesca, an Italian millionaire who is separated from his wife.

Dr Lesley Walker, of the Cancer Research Campaign, said: "Nine out of ten lumps are benign. But if they are malignant then it is important to get treatment as soon as possible."

Man acquitted of murder scared PC who bugged him

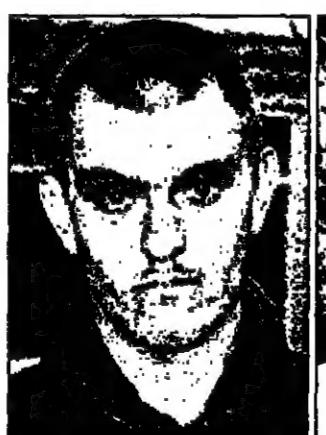
By TIM JONES

AN ODD-JOB man cleared of murdering Vicki Thompson, who was bludgeoned to death as she walked her dog, subjected the family of a policeman who investigated him to a series of death-threat telephone calls, a court was told yesterday.

Mark Weston, 22, learnt during his trial last December that the home he shared with his parents had been bugged by police while he was under suspicion. The family's conversations were relayed to the house of Weston's neighbour, PC Robert Salmon, the village constable of Ascot-under-Wychwood, Oxfordshire.

Weston spent ten months in custody before being acquitted by a jury. Paul Harrison, for the prosecution, told Witney Magistrates' Court yesterday that after Weston was released he had made more than 50 calls to PC Salmon, his wife Sheila, and their daughters Caroline, 22, and Natalie, 19, between June and September this year.

Most of the calls, Mr Harrison said, were silent, but some were much more sinister. He had whispered: "Die, die, and 'Soon you die'. Mr Harr-



Mark Weston, who still felt persecuted by the police despite being cleared of murdering Vicki Thompson

son said Mrs Salmon was so distressed she was given anti-depressant pills by her doctor.

Weston, who pleaded guilty to four charges of harassment, was caught after police mounted a surveillance operation using video equipment outside one of the telephone kiosks in the village.

After being arrested, Weston told police: "There he was, sitting in his house listening to everything being said so I decided to harass him by listening to his house."

Chris Edwards, for the de-

fence, said everything had stemmed from the dreadful murder of Mrs Thompson, which had still not been resolved. He said the charge against Weston had been dismissed in minutes because after a three-week trial the jury had decided the case against him was very weak.

Mr Edwards said: "The aftermath of the case has made victims of many people and one of them is Weston himself. He is blighted as far as job applications are concerned. Everywhere he goes

people are staring at him and the media interest will not go away."

He added: "My client says every time he goes into his garden so does PC Salmon. He feels very much under scrutiny, which he should not be because of his acquittal."

Weston, he said, believed he was being harassed by PC Salmon and had complained to police authorities about his behaviour. Mr Edwards added: "He was immature and wrong to try to get his own back by making calls to the Salmon household. But he denies the number of calls and says he did not make any threats of any kind."

Weston, he said, had decided of his own volition to stop making the calls before his arrest, after deciding they were getting him nowhere.

Weston, who is unemployed, was sentenced to a restraining order preventing him from having any contact with the Salmon family other than necessary contact with PC Salmon in his duty as a public officer.

After the hearing Weston said: "I'm glad he [PC Salmon] felt scared stiff the same way I did when I was arrested for a murder I didn't commit."

Who put the wind up Branson?

Andrew Pierce on a flight of fancy that has tickled the Virgin chief

RICHARD BRANSON'S long-standing rival, British Airways, may inadvertently have played a part in the premature departure of the Virgin Global Challenger balloon.

Technicians working on the multi-million-pound project have been at a loss to explain the freak gust of wind which propelled the world's biggest balloon 60,000 ft into the skies while the pilots were still on the ground.

As work began yesterday on a replacement envelope, it emerged that a BA 737 had landed at Marrakesh airport at almost the precise moment the 223 ft balloon broke free from its moorings on an adjoining field.

Turbulence from aircraft can distract even larger planes flying into the wake. Weather charts have confirmed

that the winds gusted at a maximum speed of up to four knots as predicted throughout the day. But when disaster struck with the BA jet in the vicinity, they soared to 14.

The half-full flight, number BA 6912, left from Gatwick Airport on schedule and landed at Marrakesh Airport 15 minutes early, at 11 am.

The balloon left on its unmanned flight at 11.02 am.

Michael Pegg, a holidaymaker from Welwyn Garden City, Hertfordshire, who was on board, said: "When we were coming down I could see the balloon was inflated. We all looked out of the windows to try to get a better view. We then lost sight of it. Three or four minutes later, when we made it on to the runway, it had broken free."

However, BA did not see the suggestion in the same humorous light. "I cannot believe our plane was anything to do with it," said a spokesman.



Portrait of the artist as a very sick man

By IAN MURRAY, MEDICAL CORRESPONDENT

REMBRANDT had a high cholesterol level and was probably suffering from a headache when he painted his famous self-portrait in 1659.

The artist, who was then 53, was showing signs of premature ageing, a condition he may well have inherited from his mother, according to a diagnosis made from a study of the picture by Carlos Espinel, a professor of cardiology and an amateur art historian.

He comes to the conclusion that when Rembrandt painted the picture, he was not only emotionally traumatised by financial and personal losses, but was becoming affected by ageing and disease.

The accuracy of the way the skin is painted, with the grey swoosh of the temporal blood vessel and the wrinkled brow, indicate that he was in pain. The likely explanation is a headache caused by temporal arteritis, an inflammation of the artery wall across the side of his forehead. This affects the scalp over the temples and causes pain and tenderness.

The eyes, too, are showing signs of his ageing process.

The thick forehead wrinkles suggest he has chronic contraction of the surrounding muscles, which would give him brow ptosis. This can be caused by a neurological disease, such as a brain tumour or a cerebral aneurysm. The left eye is surrounded with cream-coloured lines that are a sign of xanthelasma, a tell-tale indication of a high cholesterol count. The white of the eye is also showing the coloured spots of pinguecula, a sign of ageing which is found today only in people who are at least 30.

From the redness of the cheeks and nose, he was suffering from rosacea, an inflammatory skin disease, as well as rhinophyma, a condition of elderly men where the nose becomes bulbous. Rosacea is most common in middle-aged, fair-skinned patients, causing redness and an effect like broken veins, it can be caused by overlong exposure to sunlight or by drinking.

Alcohol worsens rosacea, but at the time of the painting Rembrandt was supposedly living a simple ascetic life, having lost his wife, three of his five children, his



Rembrandt's self-portrait tells a story of "disease, depression and premature ageing"

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fessor Espinel writes in the *Lancet*, he may well have been suffering from clinical depression. In a rented, dilapidated house he sat down to paint his own portrait.

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portray himself. He rendered his skin so that it spoke for him. And the skin in its frank, articulate and unforgiving language told of its struggle with time.

The artist survived for ten more years.

Press code will protect public from intrusion

BY CAROL MIDGLEY, MEDIA CORRESPONDENT

A REVISED code of practice designed to give the public greater protection from intrusion by newspapers and magazines was described yesterday as "the toughest in Europe" by Lord Wakeham, chairman of the Press Complaints Commission.

The revised regulations, influenced by the circumstances surrounding the death of Diana, Princess of Wales, in effect forbid harassment of the type practised by some paparazzi photographers.

It specifically prohibits persistent pursuit by journalists and re-emphasises the responsibility of editors to ensure that material provided from outside sources is obtained in accordance with the provisions of the code.

The text begins: "All members of the press have a duty to maintain the highest professional and ethical standards. This code sets the benchmarks for those standards. It both protects the rights of the individual and upholds the public's right to know."

Changes relate to privacy, harassment, intrusion into grief, the treatment of children

and the public interest. Children at school, it says, have the right to be free from unnecessary intrusion. It bans payments to minors and provides protection for the children of the famous.

The code, which comes into effect on January 1, acknowledges that everyone is entitled to respect with regards to their private and family life, home, health and correspondence.

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Media, pages 40-42

Bell pleads for soldiers who shot suspect

By JAMES LANDALE
POLITICAL REPORTER

MARTIN BELL yesterday launched a fresh campaign to free two Scots Guardsmen to be tried for the murder of a Catholic teenager in Belfast.

The former BBC journalist and independent MP for Tatton called for the early release of James Fisher and Mark Wright, who are serving life imprisonment for the shooting in 1992 of 18-year-old Peter McBride.

Mr Bell said the two guardsmen, who were sentenced in 1995 after three years in custody, had been in prison long enough to pay for their crime.

Fisher, 28, from Ayr, and Wright, 24, from Arbroath, shot Mr McBride while on patrol in the republican New Lodge area of north Belfast. They believed he was carrying a "coffee-jar bomb" containing shrapnel and Semtex when he ran away after an argument with their patrol commander.

Mr McBride ignored shouted warnings from the guardsmen, continued to run and was shot in the back. He was found to be unarmed and to have had no paramilitary connections. Mr McBride was the father of two children with his 18-year-old girlfriend, Pauline Devine.

The men are currently being held in Maghaberry Prison, near Lisburn, and their cases will be reviewed again next October. Mr Bell, who is seeking a meeting with Mo



Bell: guardsmen had served long enough

Mowlam, the Northern Ireland Secretary, said there was a difference between the "dreadful accident" that took place during a tense confrontation and premeditated cold-blooded murder.

He compared the guardsmen's situation with that of Private Lee Clegg, who was released after serving four years of a life sentence for the murder of a Belfast joyrider.

Mr Bell has written to Jean McBride, the mother of Peter McBride, who said she was hurt and bewildered by the MP's involvement. Those soldiers had to run two streets to catch up with him and then knelt down to shoot. She said she wanted them to serve at least ten years.

Leading article, page 21

Guildford bomb man freed early

By MARTIN FLETCHER, CHIEF IRELAND CORRESPONDENT

A LEADING IRA terrorist who says he planted the Guildford pub bomb in 1974 will be released early from an Irish prison this morning, having never been charged with that offence.

Brendan Dowd is one of nine IRA convicts being freed early by the Irish Government to boost republican confidence in the peace process. But the releases have so angered the loyalist Progressive Unionist Party that it threatened last night to pull out of the Stormont peace talks.

Dowd was given life sen-

tences for three offences in 1976. He later told police that he and his "active service unit" had planted the bomb in the Horse and Groom pub in Guildford, killing five people and injuring 54.

Dowd, 48, has served 21 years for conspiracy to murder, conspiracy to cause explosions, and the attempted murder of policemen. He was due to be freed by the summer of 2001.

The releases will mean that Ireland has let 16 IRA men out early since the ceasefire was restored in July.



With effect from the 1st January 1998, the Renault Laguna Prize Draw promotion will cease. The December winners will be notified in January 1998.

Portrait of the artist as a very sick man

By IAN MURRAY, MEDICAL CORRESPONDENT

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He comes to the conclusion that when Rembrandt painted the picture, he was not only emotionally traumatised by financial and personal losses, but was becoming affected by ageing and disease.

The accuracy of the way the skin is painted, with the grey swoosh of the temporal blood vessel and the wrinkled brow, indicate that he was in pain. The likely explanation is a headache caused by temporal arteritis, an inflammation of the artery wall across the side of his forehead. This affects the scalp over the temples and causes pain and tenderness.

The eyes, too, are showing signs of his ageing process.

The thick forehead wrinkles suggest he has chronic contraction of the surrounding muscles, which would give him brow ptosis. This can be caused by a neurological disease, such as a brain tumour or a cerebral aneurysm. The left eye is surrounded with cream-coloured lines that are a sign of xanthelasma, a tell-tale indication of a high cholesterol count. The white of the eye is also showing the coloured spots of pinguecula, a sign of ageing which is found today only in people who are at least 30.

From the redness of the cheeks and nose, he was suffering from rosacea, an inflammatory skin disease, as well as rhinophyma, a condition of elderly men where the nose becomes bulbous. Rosacea is most common in middle-aged, fair-skinned patients, causing redness and an effect like broken veins, it can be caused by overlong exposure to sunlight or by drinking.

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wealth, his art collection and his grand house in Amsterdam. He had been declared insolvent three years earlier and his painting of *Moses and the Tablets* had just been rejected.

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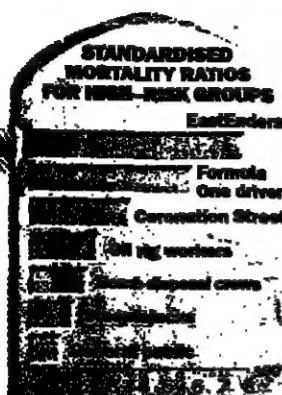
The serial killers stalking Soapland

BY IAN MURRAY, MEDICAL CORRESPONDENT

DEATH has become so commonplace in British television soap operas that they are creating a war-zone environment which distorts the nation's concept of violence, according to research by a senior fellow at a leading teaching hospital.

The study, published today in the *British Medical Journal*, shows that the chances of soap characters surviving to old age are much less than those of a bomb disposal expert, Formula One driver or steepjack. Disease is rampant, but violent death, including murder, suicide, overdose and crashes are 20 times more common than in reality.

"Characters in these serials would be advised to wear good protective clothing designed to withstand sharp implements, sudden impacts and fire and to receive regular counselling for the psychological impact of living in an environment akin to a war zone," says Tim



Crayford, 33, of the public health and epidemiology department at King's College Hospital, South London.

He studied the 35 deaths that occurred in Coronation Street, Brookside, Emmerdale and Albert Square in the 12 years since *EastEnders* first appeared in 1985. He found that characters tended to die young from a variety of obscure and often violent causes, including a plane crash in *Emmerdale* which killed four.

Of the total, 54 met a violent end and the others died of diseases including breast cancer, Aids and an undiagnosed virus that killed three in *Brookside*. People in the real world with cancer and other serious diseases have a better chance of surviving for five years than a soap character.

Death rates varied between the programmes. Fourteen died in *Coronation Street*, 17 in *EastEnders*, 26 in *Brookside* and 28 in *Emmerdale*. "Brookside Close and Emmerdale could be the most dangerous streets in the United Kingdom," Dr Crayford says.

He accepts that producers will exaggerate the dangers of real life, but says that the programmes are meant to mirror reality. "It seems sad that for soap operas to hold our interest they have to be about as dangerous as Formula One racing... Could the exaggerated portrayal of these violent and dangerous lives be contributing to our distorted national perceptions about violent crime and death?"



Characters are dying to attract your attention

Ratings war has seen a big rise in the number of casualties, writes Carol Midgley

SINCE Martha Longhurst expired from a heart attack in the song of *Coronation Street's* Rover's Return in 1964, British soaps have suffered more than their fair share of untimely deaths. But the tendency to bump off characters has grown alarmingly in recent years.

In the past 12 months, *Coronation Street* has seen off four characters: the dithering Derek Wilton (stress-induced heart attack), the taxi driver Don Breman (car fire), the cleaner Joyce Smedley (hit by a car) and Betty Turpin's new husband, Billy Williams (natural causes). Its most spectacular death was that of Alan Bradley, the Machiavellian businessman hit by a Blackpool tram as he chased Rita Sullivan down the promenade. Ken

Barlow has lost two wives (to a drug overdose and electrocution), both his parents, brother, nephew and Uncle Albert Tatlock.

Brookside is notorious for the most far-fetched deaths. Trevor Jordache was buried under the patio after his abused wife stabbed him with a kitchen knife. Sue Sullivan and her young son, Danny, fell from scaffolding and Danny Grant was stabbed on a day trip to York. Most recently, Matthew and Emily Farnham were killed in a car crash and Gladys, mother of Elaine Johnson, was smothered with a pillow.

John Bowman, editor of *Inside*

Soap magazine, said: "British soaps do seem to be much gloomier than Australian ones. That is what makes them better; they are grittier and darker. A good death can put two million on the viewing figures. When a character dies, it usually means their contract has ended or they have upset the producer."

This year has been one of carnage for *Coronation Street*. Billy Williams died off-screen, which is the biggest indignity. The actor doesn't even get to do the big death scene."

Emmerdale has raised its death quota considerably since the early 1980s, when, as *Emmerdale Farm*,

it was regarded as the television equivalent of *The Archers*. Four years ago, four characters died in a Lockerbie-style air crash and this year Ron Hudson died from Huntington's disease, Frank Tate from a heart attack, Kate Sugden of a brain haemorrhage, and Linda Fowler in a car crash.

EastEnders has seen the gangland murder of "Dirty" Den Watts, the brain haemorrhage of Arthur Fowler and the stabbing of the pub manager Eddie Royal. Pete Beale died off-screen in a car crash and Mark Fowler's wife Jill died from AIDS-related cancer.

An *EastEnders* spokeswoman said only 1 per cent of characters had been killed. There had been 15 on-screen deaths and two reported.

"*EastEnders* is a drama and, like any drama, explores the age-old complexities of life and death," she said. "The *EastEnders* data for this article was taken off unofficial Web sites and the findings should be taken with a pinch of salt. It is probably more dangerous to be a Shakespeare character."

A *Coronation Street* spokeswoman said: "This is not real life. It is a drama."

John Peake, a soap writer, said British soaps could not be compared to American ones, many of

which had ludicrous storylines.

"The US soaps are outrageous. People find underwater cities outside their towns and characters become possessed by the devil."

He said that, although the Australian soaps had generally less tragedy, they had a high quota of deaths because the turnover of actors was so quick. In *Neighbours* recently, Cheryl Stark was hit by a car and died in Ramsay Street.

"The scene was heavily cut in Britain because it was considered too distressing," Mr Peake said.

The *Neighbours* character Helen Daniels will die in a scene to be shown in Britain next year. "She

dies watching a video of Scott and Charlene's wedding. It was probably from boredom," Mr Peake said.

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Former MI6 spy jailed for bid to sell his story

BY MICHAEL EVANS, DEFENCE CORRESPONDENT

A FORMER MI6 officer was jailed for 12 months yesterday for trying to sell his story to an Australian publisher. Government lawyers fear that he will try again once he is released.

Richard Tomlinson, who served with MI6 for four years and operated in Moscow and Bosnia, will remain a category A prisoner for the four months that he is likely to serve. He has been in prison on remand for six weeks.

The case is causing acute anxiety for MI6 and the Government because of what he knows about highly secret operations. He is also bitterly angry at MI6 for sacking him.

At the Old Bailey, Sir Lawrence Verney, QC, the Recorder of London, said he was jailing him as a deterrent to others in his position, but added: "We're sadly aware it may not deter you."

Legal sources said that if he

chose to fly to Australia after being released, nothing could be done to stop him writing another book and selling it to a foreign publisher, although he would face arrest if he returned to Britain. Tomlinson, who was born in New Zealand and has dual nationality, has relatives in Australia.

His counsel, Owen Davies, hinted at the possible problems ahead when, in appealing for a lenient sentence, he said that Tomlinson "ought to be put at liberty in such a frame of mind as to encourage his future silence about delicate operations that he knows about".

Tomlinson, 34, who gained a first-class degree in aeronautical engineering at Cambridge, had set out to write about his covert MI6 operations out of grievance at being sacked in 1995 after 3½ years' probationary service. MI6

considered he had the wrong attitude for long-term employment as an intelligence officer.

By the time the Metropolitan Police Special Branch caught up with him, he had the completed book on his computer and certain chapters on two Psiion organisers. The court was told yesterday that one of those had been stolen from his Milton Keynes home.

When Tomlinson offered a synopsis to Transworld Publishers in Sydney, he claimed there was nothing in it that would damage Britain's national security. Nigel Sweeney, for the prosecution, said:

"The court was also told how Tomlinson, following the example of Peter Wright, the former MI5 officer who had *Spycatcher* published in Australia, put his proposals for a



An artist's impression of Tomlinson in the dock. The media are banned from publishing images of his face.

book to Judith McGee, a commissioning editor at Transworld, during a meeting in a cafe near Bondi beach. Miss McGee sought confirmation of his identity and assurances about the kind of story he was offering. In the end, the synopsis and a copy were placed in a locked cupboard at

Transworld and the book was never published.

In February, MI6 came to an agreement with Tomlinson under which he would scrap his plans, hand over his material and drop his complaints against the service in return for "generous" financial help. But he broke the agreement

and continued to write to publishers in Sydney.

Passing sentence, the judge told Tomlinson that he was concerned only with "national interests and security of the intelligence services who require, and rightly so, absolute confidentiality about parts of their activities".

Bidding war for tycoon's soldiers

BY JOHN SHAW

RICH collectors waged a record-breaking battle for toy soldiers from the largest private army in the world at Christie's in South Kensington, southwest London, yesterday. Prices left the pre-sale estimates far behind in repeated bidding skirmishes for items collected by the late Malcolm Forbes, the American multimillionaire publisher of *Forbes* magazines.

He kept the array of 60,000 in a museum at the Palace Mendoza in Tangier, bought when he was considering an Arab edition of the magazine.

The collection was sold in two stages and made an overall total of £519,368 with all the 1,054 lots finding buyers. Some collectors paid between two and 18 times the estimate for items from the 17th to 20th centuries.

□ A rare lettercard posted from the Titanic two days before she sank on April 12, 1912, was sold for £4,830 at Sotheby's in London yesterday. The cover was passed to stamp collector Stan Martin on the death of his mother-in-law in Clacton, Essex. He plans to donate the proceeds to the roof repair fund at his Methodist church in Clacton.

Detonator blast kills weapons collector

BY JO MERRETT

THE head of war studies at Sandhurst was killed when a detonator from his collection of military artefacts exploded in his hand.

Dr John Pimlott, 49, died on October 24, just 24 hours after returning from a battlefield visit to Alamein in Egypt. He managed to stagger into his lounge after the device from a German shell, blew up while he was examining it, then died a few minutes later.

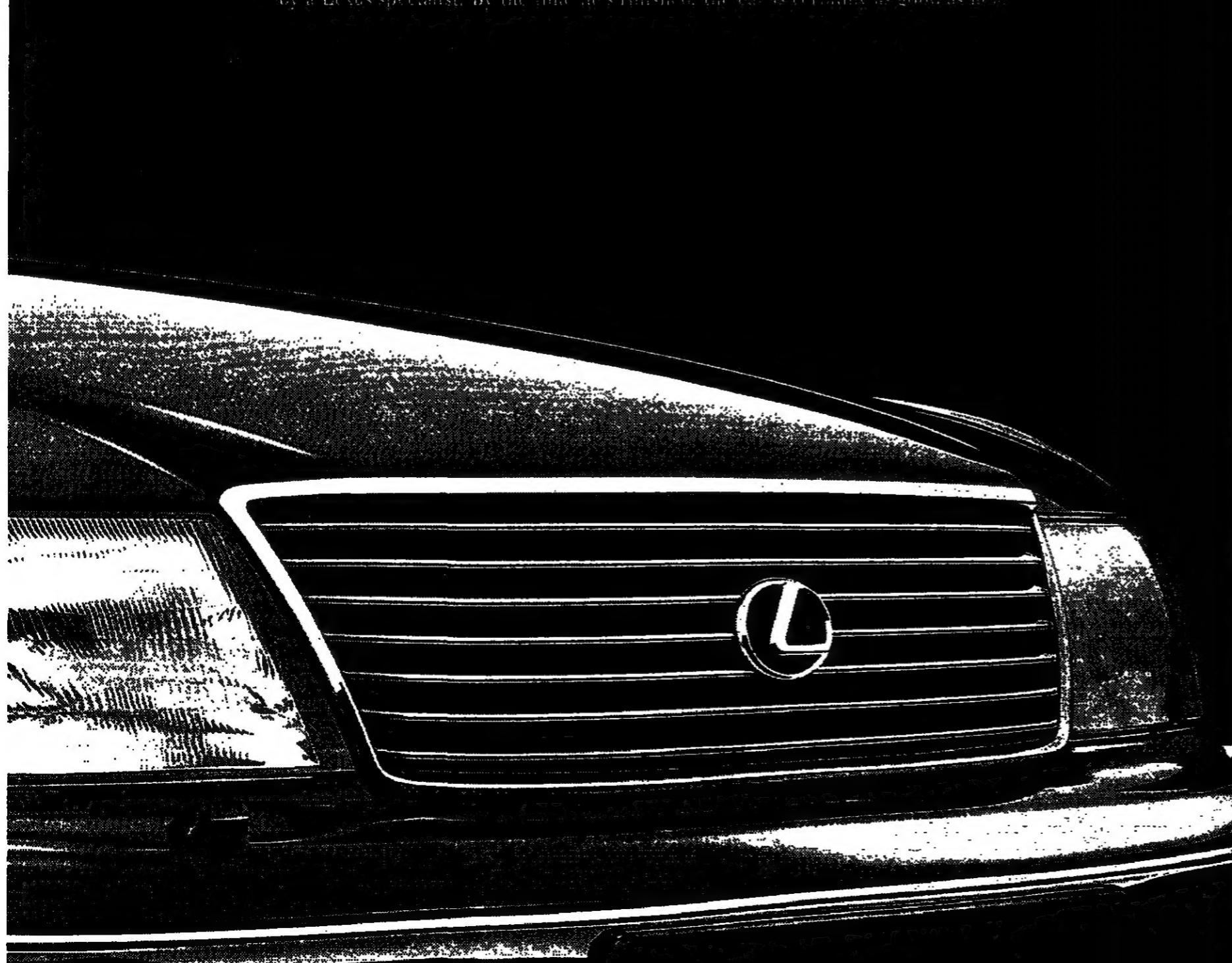
Earlier in October, before his visit to North Africa with colleagues from the Royal Military Academy, he had been to the Somme battlefield.

The father of two was found by his wife, Maggie, lying dead at their home in Camberley, Surrey, when she got up that morning. Mrs Pimlott said in a statement read to an inquest at Woking, Surrey, that she had gone to bed at 9.45pm the night before with a heavy cold and had gone straight to sleep.

Gary Sheffield, a colleague of Dr Pimlott, told the inquest that a firearms expert had said that the device that killed him was probably a small detonator from one of the world wars. A verdict of accidental death was recorded.

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Straw entitled to keep Hindley in jail for life

Moors murderer vows to take fight for freedom to a higher court, reports Richard Ford

MYRA HINDLEY, the Moors murderer, vowed last night to fight on for her freedom after she failed in her attempt to overturn the Home Secretary's decision that she must die in prison.

As Hindley prepared to take her fight to the Court of Appeal, the House of Lords and eventually the European Courts, an inquiry was under way into how the *Daily Mail* was able to publish the result of the court challenge before it was delivered. Lord Bingham of Cornhill, the Lord Chief Justice, suggested that legal advisers for either the Home Secretary or Hindley were responsible for the leak.

He told David Pannick, QC, for the Government, and Edward Fitzgerald, QC, for Hindley, to carry out an investigation. Lord Bingham said it was "utterly unacceptable" that parties involved in a case should learn of the decision through the media.

In his 35-page judgment, Lord Bingham ruled that the Home Secretary had the power to decide that a life sentence imposed on an offender "will mean life". There remains a chance

that Hindley, 55, could be released because Jack Straw has said the whole-life tariff could be reduced in the event of "exceptional progress" while an offender was in jail.

After the ruling Mr Pannick said that if Hindley wished to apply for a fresh review of her case on the ground that she had made exceptional progress in prison, it would be considered by Mr Straw.

Hindley has served 31 years for murdering Lesley Ann Downey, 10, and Edward Evans, 17. In 1987 she admitted involvement in the murders of John Kilbride, 12, Keith Bennett, 12, and Pauline Reade, 16.

The Lord Chief Justice, sitting with Mr Justice Hooper and Mr Justice Astill, rejected claims by lawyers acting for Hindley that a provisional minimum sentence of 30 years was unlawfully increased to a whole-life tariff. But he expressed unease at the fact that decisions on how long convicted murderers should remain in prison were taken by politicians rather than the judiciary.

He said: "I part from the case

uneasily conscious that the issues that may really underlie the case are not before us. There is room for serious debate whether the task of determining how long convicted murderers should serve in prison for punishment for the crimes should be undertaken by the judiciary (as in the case of discretionary life prisoners), or, as

possibility of a prisoner making exceptional progress while in jail. However, the amended policy unveiled by his successor, Mr Straw, last month, which allows for exceptional progress, was not unlawful.

Outside the court Winnie Johnson, the mother of Keith Bennett, whose body has never been found, said she was pleased by the court's decision.

"She's staying in prison which is the main thing, but I don't understand why she constantly keeps appealing. This is done with taxpayer's money, people work hard for someone so evil to keep doing this. This whole thing just seems to go on and I just want an end to it."

Hindley had challenged a decision by Michael Howard made earlier this year and reaffirmed by Mr Straw last month that a whole-life tariff was necessary to meet the needs of "retribution and deterrence".

The Lord Chief Justice said that the policy announced by Mr Howard in 1994 had been unlawful because it failed to make allowance for the

needs of "retribution and deterrence".



Myra Hindley: she may claim she has made exceptional progress while in prison

Boy dies in strangling game that went wrong

BY JOANNA BALE

POLICE warned parents and children yesterday of the dangers of a strangling game after a schoolboy died while experimenting with it.

Liam Hart, 11, was found unconscious in a bedroom at his home on Wednesday with a towelling cord from a dressing gown wrapped around his neck. His mother tried to revive him but he was dead on arrival at hospital.

Detectives said they believed Liam had played it before. They were convinced he had not committed suicide and asked teachers and parents to be on the lookout for the activity, so-called because children's faces turn red as they half-strangle themselves.

Detective Inspector Kenny Caldwell, of Stockport police, said: "It's certainly a game the police have never heard of or one that teachers have been aware of. We have to find out who showed Liam how to play the game. We have had an indication he tried it before."

He added: "Anything along these lines interferes with the bloodstream and could have

fatal consequences. I have an 11-year-old son myself and I shall be speaking to him."

Liam was a pupil at Avondale High School in Cheadle Heath, where staff yesterday issued a warning about the game at assembly.

Eric Jackson, the head teacher, said he was very concerned about the circumstances of Liam's death. "Until this morning, I had no idea what 'Rising Sun' was. We have spoken to students and tried to give them the facts. We are trying our damnedest to make sure this doesn't happen to any other youngsters."

"Liam was a smashing little lad. He was everybody's next-door neighbour, a warm, friendly and caring dad. He always worked hard and was very eager to help and had lots and lots of friends."

Mr Jackson added that he had been told yesterday of an incident at another Stockport school, less than a fortnight ago, when a child had to be given medical treatment after playing the game. "In that case the outcome was not so tragic."

He added: "I spoke to some girls from my school this morning who had tried the 'Rising Sun' game and asked them if I should know what was going on, but they told me, how could you?"

A cross-section of one of the 14 petrified pine trees

Early Christmas trees unearthed

BY PAUL WILKINSON

THE 310 million-year-old ancestors of today's Christmas trees have been discovered during work at an opencast mining site.

Fourteen petrified trees, said to be the earliest examples of today's conifers, have been exposed at the Prior's Close site near Chester-le-Street, Co Durham. At first the primitive trees, some up to ten metres long, were thought to be giant ferns, but Professor Andrew Scott, a palaeobotanist at the University of London, has identified them as very early pine trees — the first to be found in Britain.

Scientists are especially excited as, thanks to a flow of

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Dewar's 300-day Bill revises 300 years of history

By SHIRLEY ENGLISH

THE legislation that will create the first Scottish Parliament for almost 300 years was published yesterday by Donald Dewar, Scottish Secretary, who hailed it as an historic and radical document which would provide a "pathway" to a new constitutional framework for the United Kingdom.

Unveiling the Scotland Bill, Mr Dewar said: "In well under 300 days we have seen in train the biggest change in three hundred years of Scottish history. The Government

has moved quickly to keep our promise, the promise to deliver a Scottish Parliament."

He said the Bill fulfilled the ambitions of the Government's devolution White Paper, which had been given the clear and enthusiastic backing of Scots who voted in the referendum in September.

It would establish a devolved Parliament in Edinburgh able

to make its own laws and with the power to vary income tax by 3p in the pound. There were "no hidden taxes". He

MAIN POINTS

- Scottish Parliament will have 129 MSPs with First Minister appointed by the Queen. First elections by proportional representation in 1999 and then every four years. Parliament will sit for first time in 2000.
- It will have powers to make laws on all domestic matters, including health, education, the law, transport, local government and the environment.
- A number of key powers will be reserved at Westminster, including the UK constitution, foreign policy, economic policy, defence, medical ethics, employment law and Europe.
- The Scottish Parliament will continue to receive its share of UK public expenditure in the form of the Scottish Block Grant, which is currently £14 billion.
- It will have powers by 2000-01 to vary the basic rate of income tax by 3p; this will be payable by UK residents who live more than half the year in Scotland.



Scottish Secretary Donald Dewar in Glasgow yesterday, where he described the new Scotland Bill as a radical and historic document

said. Echoing the words of the late John Smith, former Labour Party leader, Mr Dewar said the Parliament was "the settled will of the Scottish people" and called on the House of Lords not to delay or disrupt its passage through Parliament. He added: "This Bill will give Scotland the power to boost its self-confidence, economically, culturally and politically."

The Bill fleshes out the powers laid down in the devolution White Paper, published in July, with only a few minor alterations to plug the gaps. These include giving the Scottish Parliament the power to legislate on dangerous dogs, but reserving powers at Westminster over "outer space" and "dealing with an enemy".

Most notably the Scottish Parliament will be able to move at its own pace to legislate on the implementation of European laws. Scottish Ministers and officials will be able to participate in the Council of Ministers' meetings, but only as part of the UK delegation.

The Bill also outlines a more powerful "disciplinary" role than was first envisaged for the Scottish Secretary. He will be able to overrule the Parliament and halt legislation he believes is inappropriate, and he will have powers to ensure the UK's international treaties are implemented in Scotland.

The Scottish Bill will get its second reading in early January and will then go to a parliamentary committee. It is expected to receive Royal Assent in October and elections to the Scottish Parliament will be held in 1999. The Scottish

Parliament will sit for the first time in 2000.

It will have a powerful new First Minister — equivalent to a Scottish Prime Minister — and a Presiding Officer, whose role will mirror that of the Speaker of the House of Commons.

The Bill includes the provision to review the number of Scottish MPs at Westminster through the Boundary Commission, as promised in the

White Paper, and enshrines the sovereignty of the Crown: all Scottish Bills will require Royal Assent.

Powers to be reserved by Westminster powers include the UK constitution, foreign policy, macro-economic policy and fiscal and monetary affairs, employment legislation, social security policy, regulation of certain professions and transport safety.

The Bill was given a broad

welcome yesterday by both the Scottish Nationalists and Liberal Democrats. However, both parties indicated they would be asking for assurances that the Parliament be exempt from some sex discrimination laws so at least 40 per cent of MSPs would be women. They were also concerned that moral issues, such as abortion law, would be retained at Westminster.

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Westminster pays, but MPs will call the tune



Magnus Linklater
believes the Scottish parliament will have immense influence

Yesterday may have been an "historic day for Scotland", but it was also a day for heavy reading. The Scotland Bill comes in at 40,000 words, 116 clauses and eight supplementary schedules. We are told it took 60,000 "person hours" to complete: it will thus be very politically correct.

It contains all the mind-numbing sub-sections that will determine whether the new Scottish parliament will work or not. There is much here for Tam Dalyell, MP, that master of the fine detail to get his teeth into. He will find no answer to his famous "West Lothian question", but he will be struck by the constant emphasis on the continuing role of Westminster, the weight given to the Secretary of State for Scotland, and the significant voice Scotland is to have in Europe.

The central anomaly of Scottish MPs being allowed to vote on English matters, while English MPs have no equivalent say on Scottish matters, remains. However, from the very first clause, reading simply: "There shall be a Scottish Parliament", its remit is clearly set out. This is going to be a parliament wielding immense influence over civic affairs in Scotland — the health service, the criminal justice system, education and housing among others. It will still be financed by the block grant determined by Westminster, but within that it will have freedom of choice.

Perhaps the major surprise is the role that a new Scotland may acquire in Europe. Members of the Scottish parliament will be able to attend the European Council of Ministers as part of the UK delegation, and the Scottish Parliament will be given powers to legislate itself on European laws. The parliament will be given powers to deal directly with the European Union and, for instance, to move faster or slower than Westminster if it sees European legislation as helping or hindering.

Here, possibly, lie the seeds of conflict with Westminster. There will doubtless be many more.

After Dolly, meet Polly the therapeutic lamb

THE Scottish scientists responsible for Dolly the cloned sheep have now produced Polly — a lamb which makes a human blood-clotting protein.

Polly was made from sheep cells, modified by the introduction of a human gene.

As a clone she is less remarkable than Dolly, who was made from adult cells, but the technique used to make her is likely to prove more valuable in the long run.

She is not by any means the first animal made which is capable of producing human proteins in its milk. But the team at the Roslin Research Institute in Roslin, Midlothian, report in *Science* that their method is far more efficient than those used earlier, and can also be used to select the sex of the lamb.

The previous hit-or-miss method used at Roslin and elsewhere involved injecting the human gene into an egg, and then putting it back into a mother sheep in the hope that her lamb would express the human protein made by that gene in her milk. Only a minority did, so the method

Nigel Hawkes reports on how scientists have developed a technique for creating lambs to combat human disease

was wasteful — many pregnancies failed to produce transgenic lambs.

The new method makes it possible to ensure that the gene is integrated into the cells before they are used to replace the DNA in the egg. That creates a higher success rate.

Dr Ron James, managing director of PPL, the company linked to the Roslin Institute, said yesterday: "The production of transgenic livestock by nuclear transfer allows products to be developed far more rapidly and uses fewer animals than earlier methods.

The technique also allows us to develop therapeutics that would previously have been impossible or uneconomical." In Polly's case, the gene used was that which makes Factor IX, the blood-clotting

spontaneously, but had to be induced, and there was a high stillbirth rate of 46 per cent. It is hoped that further development of the technique will solve these problems.

Dr Ian Wilmut, the team leader, said the result was "tremendously encouraging and a major step towards our goal of being able to make very precise genetic modifications in livestock species". The technique has been patented by the institute, which says it has great commercial potential.

Its success in producing Dolly is saluted by *Science* as "breakthrough of the year". It beat such achievements as the Mars Pathfinder mission, the extraction of Neanderthal DNA and the identification of strange sources of gamma rays in the sky.

Areas in which the Polly technology could be useful, the institute says, include transplantation of organs from pigs to humans, because it would allow the pigs to be modified so that their organs were not recognised as foreign by the human recipients.



Polly the man-made lamb with her Scottish Blackface surrogate mother

Aids scare woman 'has clean bill of health'

BY PAUL WILKINSON

ONE of the two women at the centre of an Aids scare on Britain's largest army base said yesterday that a new blood test had proved she was not carrying the virus.

Lindsay Griffiths, 19, is awaiting confirmation of the test at a hospital near the base at Catterick, North Yorkshire. She said: "It is just such a relief to hear this news. I have been to hell and back these last few days and I feel angry at the way I have been treated."

Earlier this week, Colonel Neil Donaldson, the garrison deputy commander, warned his 7,000 troops about "at least" two women who were diagnosed HIV-positive, but were continuing promiscuous liaisons with soldiers. He refused to identify them.

Miss Griffiths and her friend Charlotte "Bonnie" Clarke, 20, said they believed they were the women to whom he was referring. They live in Colburn near the base, and the activities at Miss Clarke's flat have been the subject of complaints by neighbours.

Man finds mouse baked in can of beans

By JOANNA BALE



Hillary Clinton

A SAINSBURY'S customer eating baked beans straight from the tin came across what he thought was a piece of string. He tugged at it and, to his horror, pulled out a mouse by the tail. The animal had been cooked in the tin.

The beans were bought in New Cross, south London, in November last year by Robert Howard, from Brockley in southeast London. This week HL Foods, which produced the own-brand beans for Sainsbury's, was fined £8,000 by magistrates at Greenwich, southeast London, after pleading guilty to offences under the Food Safety Act.

A spokeswoman for Lewisham council, which brought the prosecution, said yesterday: "Nobody knows for sure at what point of the process the mouse got in. The beans are sieved and blanched, tomato sauce is added and the tins are sealed and cooked at 130 degrees. The mouse's stomach was full of starch so it may have been eating the beans before it was boiled."

More than 12,000 tins from the same batch were removed from supermarket shelves by Sainsbury's. A spokeswoman for the company said: "Food safety is one of our top priorities. Any foreign object found in our products is taken very seriously and as soon as we knew there was a problem we launched an investigation with HL Foods, who immediately admitted liability."

"We are now satisfied that there are tighter measures in place at HL Foods and environmental health officers have also checked the factory and are fully satisfied."

Robin Brooks, sales and marketing director at HL Foods, of Long Sutton, Lincolnshire, said: "We undertook a detailed review of procedures and have tightened our already rigorous safety checks to ensure this incident never happens again."

The company, which still supplies Sainsbury's and other supermarket chains, is in discussions with Mr Howard over compensation.

NEWS IN BRIEF



Hillary Clinton

First lady linked to pit town

Hillary Clinton has been invited to trace her family roots in the former mining community of Stanley in Co Durham in the North East.

Local historians believe Mrs Clinton, whose maiden name is Rodham, is linked to the Roddams who worked and lived in Durham pit villages in the last century. In 1883 the man thought to be her great grandfather, Jonathan Roddam, emigrated with his family to Pennsylvania. The county council has now invited Mrs Clinton to see where her family came from.

£1m damages

A man with an extreme form of cerebral palsy was awarded agreed damages of £1 million at the High Court in London. Alan Dix, 24, suffered severe asphyxiation shortly before birth at Westminster Hospital, London.

Drugs lesson

Doncaster City Technology College, Bradford, the recipient of an award from West Yorkshire Police for its anti-drugs policy, has suspended two boys, aged 14 and 15, after they were found with cannabis during a routine search.

Wader count

The British Trust for Ornithology is appealing for bird-watchers to help it to complete a pan-European survey of shoreline waders by the end of January. Anyone interested should telephone 01842 750050.

informative:

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From friends who respect and admire him

The gift L. Ron Hubbard has for you, me and all mankind is peace and freedom. Peace and freedom to discover and know."

Terry Jastrow
Seven-time Emmy Award
Winning Producer/Director

Having practiced medicine for fifty years, I have concluded that L. Ron Hubbard is clearly among that handful of individuals who have made remarkable and very major contributions to the betterment of the individual. That he had the courage to challenge outdated notions and introduce entirely workable ideas only underscores his greatness."

Theron G. Randolph, M.D.
Founder of the American
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I have found many writers and teachers simply reiterate that which is known and accepted. Seldom in a lifetime does there come a man who challenges the axioms. L. Ron Hubbard was such a man. Not satisfied with the status quo he reached for the stars. In so doing he forced the rest of us to move from our complacency and to know why we believe what we believe.

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LRon Hubbard was an extraordinary human being whose contributions to education in the field of literacy should be applauded by all. An explorer, teacher, entrepreneur, writer, and staunch patriot, he followed his own path, never allowing anyone to set boundaries on what he could or would do. We should all learn from the example of his life, and strive to make ourselves and the world a better place."

Dr. Harry Kloor, Ph. D.
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Professor of English and
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Words cannot express my undying appreciation to Mr. L. Ron Hubbard, for fulfilling the prophesies of long ago, and bringing to man the way to spiritual freedom."

Mr. Fumio Sawada
Director
Sophis University, Japan

Queen marks 65 years of Christmas messages

Alan Hamilton on a tradition that was launched on a collapsing chair

ON Christmas Day in 1932, a rather grumpy King George V left the family dinner table at Sandringham and went into a back-stairs office to deliver the first royal Christmas broadcast.

Apart from the chair collapsing under him as he sat down, it went well. The two microphones and red cue light were hidden in cabinets of Australian walnut and the table was covered with a heavy cloth to dampen the echo. Twenty million people heard the King's brief message of cheer, all of 250 words.

"Through one of the marvels of modern science," the King intoned, "I am enabled, this Christmas Day, to speak to all my peoples throughout the Empire. I take it as a good omen that wireless should have reached its present perfection at a time when the Empire has been linked in closer union."

That the world could hear the King-Emperor live was regarded as a technical marvel, and the harbinger of even more astonishing things to come. *The Observer* newspaper, with rare perspicacity, commented: "The time is not far distant when it will be possible for the remotest exile not only to hear the voice of the King, but to see His Majesty in the act of utterance."

That time, it transpired, was



George V made the first Christmas broadcast; and George VI continued to do so through the war years

a mere quarter-century distant. Christmas radio broadcasts had continued through the war, and King George VI's addresses to his embattled people had been a source of inspiration. Then in 1954 the BBC approached the freshly-crowned Queen Elizabeth II with the suggestion that she give her Christmas message on television. She demurred, saying the time for such innovation had not yet arrived. She relented in 1957, having earlier that year spoken directly to cameras during a tour of Canada, a royal innovation that was particularly well received. It was also the 25th anniversary of George VI's first wireless address.

Antony Craxton, a veteran BBC producer who had been a

schoolmate of Prince Philip at Gordonstoun, was despatched to Sandringham on Christmas Day, as were an army of BBC and Post Office engineers and linemen. The Queen, unused to addressing her subjects live in camera, was very nervous, but was coached in calm by her husband, who had made a number of live studio appearances.

Like *The Morecambe and Wise Christmas Show*, the Queen's broadcast became part of the fabric of Christmas tradition. But not any more. The BBC calculated the number of viewers for the 1985 broadcast to be 17.4 million. By 1993 it had slipped marginally to 16.5 million. Recently there has been a sharper decline: last year's official viewing figure was a mere 11 million, rather less than the audience for the spin-off *Christmas Collection*, later in the day, of *Only Fools And Horses*.



This cartoon by Alasdair Hilleary was commissioned by the Princess Royal for the Queen's golden wedding anniversary, which was celebrated last month

Record viewers expected this year

AFTER years of declining interest at home, the Queen's traditional Christmas broadcast is likely to attract its biggest audience this year, with television companies around the world scrambling to screen it in full.

Demand for the programme has been stimulated by the death of Diana, Princess of Wales: broadcasters are hoping the Queen will refer to her former daughter-in-law. Buckingham Palace resolutely refused to disclose the content of the Queen's message yesterday.

It will not, as some expected, be live from Sandringham. The Queen recorded it at Windsor earlier this week and copies are already on their way to remote parts of the Commonwealth.

The programme will be broadcast on all major British television and radio networks at 3pm. It will be offered for simultaneous transmission around the world by major television networks, including CNN, Reuters and Associated Press, who in the past have taken only brief news clips. It will also be shown on British Airways long-haul flights leaving from Heathrow and Gatwick airports and will be available on the Internet on both the Buckingham Palace Website — www.royal.gov.uk — and the ITN website www.itn.co.uk. The broadcast is being produced by ITN for the first time.

War museum in the firing line

By RUSSELL JENKINS

A £40 MILLION project to build an Imperial War Museum for the North was thrown into doubt yesterday when the Heritage Lottery Fund rejected an application for the bulk of the funding.

The museum, to be built alongside the new Lowry Centre on industrial wasteland beside the Manchester Ship Canal in Trafford, was expected to house historic weapons and war art.

The futuristic design, produced by the Polish-American architect Daniel Libeskind, had already provoked controversy. The building, which took the form of three giant shards, symbolised battles on land, sea and air. The 6,000 sq ft building was said to resemble a "broken globe shattered by the wars of the early 20th century". Much of the weaponry and archive material due to go on display has never been on public view. Its supporters believe the

scheme would attract 400,000 visitors a year, but the lottery fund trustees say the project does not fit in with their policy of "doing more for less".

The Imperial War Museum had received £600,000 from the Heritage Lottery Fund. It has already attracted £1.6 million from the local European Regional Development Fund. The museum's supporters were shocked by the decision and immediately appealed to Chris Smith, the Culture Secretary.

The trustees said the amount of money for such projects had been cut back since the setting up of the sixth "good cause", the New Opportunities Fund.

They also took the view that the Manchester Museum of Science and Technology, the City Art Gallery and the Manchester Museum have already benefited substantially from a joint £36 million lottery funding pledge.

Bulgaria in Crisis

By ROBIN COOPER, Reuters

LEFT TO FREEZE. Yordan, 16, shivers as temperatures drop from cold and hunger this winter under aid - warmer than zero. Bulgaria's temperatures plummeting. Yordan's scant clothing and no shoes offer him little protection from the bitter cold and there is no money to heat his orphanage. There are 37,000 places in Bulgaria's orphanages.

No Money To Feed The Children No Money To Heat The Orphanages

Bulgaria is a country in the midst of a serious economic crisis. Now thousands of children are suffering terribly as Siberian temperatures hit the country. Urgent help is needed.

There is little money to heat the orphanages. Orphanage Directors are having to beg for food from local villages and rarely know where the next meal is coming from. In some areas children, like Yordan, are going hungry and the cold could prove fatal for many children this winter. Without aid this could be catastrophic for Bulgaria's orphanage children.

The European Children's Trust, sister charity of the Romanian Orphanage Trust, is ready to distribute emergency food packs, clothes and fuel to the orphanages in most need.

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Harman enrages disability group at talks on cuts

By JILL SHERMAN AND PHILIP WEBSTER

DISABILITY campaigners were furious yesterday at Harriet Harman's failure to offer them any assurance that benefits for the sick and disabled would not be cut.

During a meeting with the all-party disability group, led by Lord Ashley of Stoke, Ms Harman, the Social Security Secretary, promised better consultation on future changes. But she would not rule out cuts, taxation or means testing for any of the six disability benefits that now cost the Exchequer £24 billion a year. She also raised the possibility of money being given to local councils to hand out as they thought necessary rather than her department paying benefit to individual claimants.

After the hour-long meeting, Lord Ashley, a former Labour minister, expressed his disappointment and frustration. "Disabled people will have a miserable Christmas," he said. "I've had lots of letters from people who are worried, frightened and anxious and hardly dare turn on the television in case they hear about further cutbacks."

He said that he would continue to demand a categorical undertaking from Ms

Harman that there would be no cuts. "We said we supported the review of the Welfare to Work programme on condition that there were no cuts in individual welfare or disability benefits," Harriet Harman has not given that undertaking.

Ms Harman later suggested that existing claimants would be protected but that new claimants could find benefits reduced, or even abolished. "We cannot say we will continue with the status quo. We would only do that if we thought the system was working well and it isn't."

Lord Ashley said that Ms Harman had agreed to meet the group again in January but he complained that she had failed to give straight answers to any of the questions put forward.

Members of the group, which included Lord Rix, chairman of Mencap, and the Tory MPs Angela Browning and Peter Bottomley, asked Ms Harman what the result of the review was and if it had been specifically set up to save money. She is said to have skirted round the subject, merely saying the point was not to carry out the welfare state back to the principles on which it was founded, which is

protecting those who could not work.

Yesterday's meeting came after the Cabinet held another lengthy debate about what its members accept is the most sensitive problem facing the Government this Parliament. Although Mr Blair's determination to push through reform was endorsed, ministers agreed that the Government must explain its intentions better than it has over the cuts in benefits for single parents.

It was agreed that a Green Paper setting out changes to the welfare state would be published in February. There was also said to be agreement with John Prescott's remark that it should establish a "consensus for change".

Ministers deeply regret that the first test of their resolve to carry out radical change came on a Tory-imposed cut. But they believe that it could help to prepare the party for comprehensive reform based on getting people into work.

Mr Blair told the Cabinet that the social security budget amounted to more than the total spent on health, education and defence. He said: "We have got to get the facts out about how the welfare state is not helping those most in need."

Mr Blair's spokesman re-

underlined the importance of work, helping those who are in need. "He added that people would support what the Government was seeking to do once the facts were presented.

Gordon Brown, the Chancellor, said that the Government would rightly be judged on whether it mounted a successful attack on poverty. He told colleagues: "We have got to get the facts out about how the welfare state is not helping those most in need."

fused to discuss whether individual benefits such as child benefit or disability and sickness allowances would be affected. But he said that the Government could not get into a position where it had to defend every benefit to every person, and he highlighted increasing reports of people on sickness and disability allowances who should not be claiming it. He insisted that the premise of the review was not to introduce "Tory" cuts. It was to alleviate poverty.



Lord Ashley after meeting Harriet Harman yesterday

Tories prefer Blair to Hague

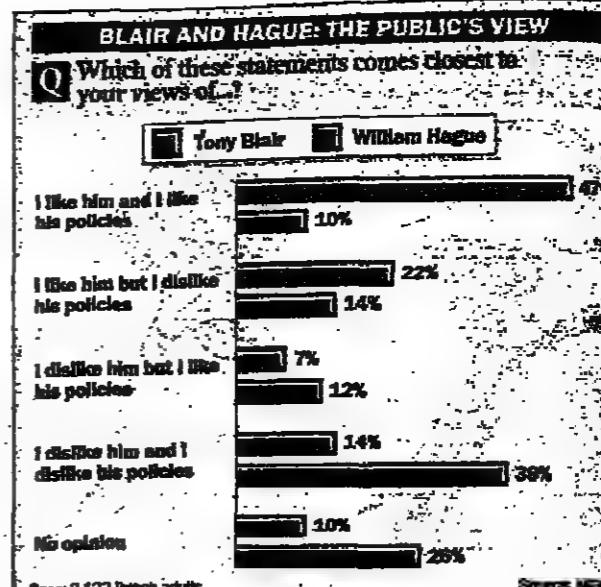
By PETER RIDDELL

MORE Tory supporters like Tony Blair than like William Hague, their own leader, according to the latest MORI poll for *The Times*.

The poll, undertaken last weekend, underlines the sharp contrast in popularity between the two leaders. Mr Hague has a serious problem in establishing his identity and personality with the voters.

In June, just after he was elected Tory leader, three fifths of the public did not have a view either way about him. This has now fallen to a quarter. The bad news for him is that most of the previous don't know have shifted to not liking him. While the proportion disliking him has risen from 18 to 24 per cent since June, the number disliking him has jumped from 20 to 30 per cent. The swing against him has been even across the social and age spectrum. Unusually for a Tory leader, he is almost as unpopular among those aged over 55 as among 18 to 24-year-olds.

Mr Hague has the further problem that he is also disliked by many Tory supporters. Those saying that they would vote for him on balance disliked rather than liked Mr Hague by 42 to 39 per cent. However, these Tories like Mr Blair by a 51 to 42 per cent



margin. This ties in with the monthly approval ratings.

Dissatisfaction with the way that Mr Hague is doing his job as Conservative leader is as high among Tory supporters as among the public as a whole.

There has also been a doubling since June in the proportion disliking Mr Hague's policies to 52 per cent, while the numberliking his policies has risen from 14 to just 22 per cent.

Before the election, the public disliked Tory policies even more than now, though, on balance they liked John Major. He was roughly twice as popular as his successor.

By contrast, Mr Blair has become even more liked by the public during the course of this year. Last January, he was liked rather than disliked by 53 to 35 per cent. This has increased to a 69 to 21 per cent margin. The proportionliking rather than disliking his policies has risen from a net

balance of plus 8 to plus 18 points.

Admittedly, Mr Blair's net approval rating — measuring those satisfied minus those dissatisfied with his performance — has fallen from plus 50 to plus 34 points since late November. Among Labour supporters, his net rating has dipped from plus 80 to plus 73 points.

But these ratings are still higher than Mr Major ever enjoyed and higher even than the post-Falklands peak of Margaret Thatcher.

The MORI economic optimism index — measuring those thinking that the general economic condition of the country will improve rather than get worse over the next 12 months — is now minus 4 points. This compares with plus 6 points in late November and is the lowest rating since last December.

□ MORI interviewed a representative quota sample of 2,122 adults from December 12 to 15.

New Labour's honeymoon is still going strong

are still unwilling to prefer the Tories to Labour.

The Blair team will regard these trends as a vindication for its step-by-step strategy of proving that Labour can be trusted in office after so long in opposition. But that does not mean that awkward decisions on taxes and spending can be postponed indefinitely.

The Government has so far managed to avoid unpopularity by raising spending on popular programmes through a series of hidden and indirect tax increases (on pension funds, the windfall levy on privatised utilities and by raiding the National Lottery). But there is a limit to such easy options. If the comprehensive spending review is to succeed, there will have to be real cuts in some programmes, notably social security, to finance growth elsewhere. These tensions will test the Government's popularity, as will any slowdown in the economy and

**RIDDELL
ON POLITICS**

halt to the steady decline in unemployment.

The sensible Tory response to these poll ratings is to be patient and to think long-term, as Mr Hague is doing with his far-reaching proposals to change party organisation and internal democracy as a first step towards winning back public confidence. By contrast, some Tory spokesmen are making a mistake in making strident attacks on the Government. The public is neither impressed nor convinced. Far better to be measured, which is in tune with the public mood.

Nonetheless, the Tories do have a problem with Mr Hague. His strong public performances, both at the party conference and often at Prime Minister's Questions, are not getting through to people. After being initially non-committal about him, many voters, including Tory supporters, are now taking a hostile view of his leadership. That will be hard to shift.

PETER RIDDELL

Press register demanded

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Doctors urge caution as Yeltsin announces return to Kremlin



Viktor Chernomyrdin, the Prime Minister, visiting President Yeltsin at the clinic yesterday.

PRESIDENT YELTSIN'S doctors yesterday cautioned him to stay in hospital a little longer after he announced that he was feeling better and would be back at work in the Kremlin today.

The initial announcement by Mr Yeltsin was a blow for his detractors who have been hinting that it is time Russia had a leader whose health could be relied upon.

After an eight-day absence from public view, when doctors confined him to the Barvikha sanatorium outside Moscow to recover from a bad cold, the Russian leader looked and sounded much better.

"I am ending my stay here," said Mr Yeltsin. "Tomorrow I return to work and from the new year I will be back to a full-scale schedule," he added, admonishing journalists for

Richard Beeston sees a bullish President confound claims that he is too ill to rule

reporting that his absence was due to a recurring heart ailment.

"Everything is all right with me. My illness is not related to any heart problems. It was indeed a cold and there had been a danger of complications," he said.

Barely five hours later, a presidential spokesman said that Mr Yeltsin "could remain hospitalized on the advice of his doctors".

Coming so soon after the President's bullish comments, however, the Kremlin spokesman explained that Mr Yeltsin had simply been "expressing his desire" to resume work. "The issue [of his departure] is

currently being studied. His stay at the clinic could be extended, maybe by a day, maybe more," the official added.

Although the holiday season is normally a quiet period in Russian politics, Mr Yeltsin may find himself back at the centre of a battle with the opposition-dominated parliament, which has taken advantage of the Kremlin leader's absence to score points against the Government.

Yesterday deputies in the Duma, the lower house of parliament, passed a motion condemning Mr Yeltsin's unexpected offer in Stockholm to cut the number of nuclear

warheads by a one third and to slash conventional forces in the northwest region by 40 per cent.

The motion described the offers as "irresponsible and misplaced" and "inconsistent with Russia's laws".

The language of the motion suggested that the Duma was in no mood to ratify Russia's Start 2 agreement with America to reduce strategic nuclear weapons, a move President Clinton has said he wants completed before he visits Russia next year.

Of more pressing concern to the Kremlin leader is the fate of next year's budget which passes its first reading thanks to his intervention. However, the Duma has postponed the second reading until Wednesday and it now seems unlikely it will be ready before the end of the year.

"We must have a confirmed budget in the new year," said Mr Yeltsin.

□ Air chief sacked: Mr Yeltsin yesterday dismissed General Viktor Prudnikov, the chief of Russia's air defence forces, the President's press service reported.

No explanation was given for the decree dismissing the 58-year-old general. However, the move was widely seen as part of the planned merger of Russia's air force and air defence forces into a single force in 1998.

Late last year, General Prudnikov was named chief of military co-operation headquarters of the Commonwealth of Independent States, a loose alliance that replaced the former Soviet Union. The general will apparently continue to hold that post. (AP)

SERGEI KARPUKIN / REUTERS

Traitor Philby tried suicide, widow reveals

FROM RICHARD BEESTON IN MOSCOW

KIM PHILBY, the Soviet double agent who betrayed Britain during the Cold War, tried to take his own life soon after defecting to Moscow in the 1960s, according to a book written by his widow.

Nearly a decade after Britain's most famous traitor died and was buried with full KGB honours in Moscow, Rufina Philby, the spy's fourth wife, said that she had written about their life together to rehabilitate his battered reputation.

Philby is despised to this day by the British intelligence community for decades of treachery which led to the deaths of scores of agents and the compromising of clandestine operations and the best kept secrets of the West. However, his widow cast him in a different light. "I spent the best part of 20 years with him and I wanted to write about the real man, not the figure of legend, but the intelligent, kind and very ordinary person he was," she said at the launch of her book, *I Was My Own Spy*.

"Literally from the first day we met I forgot that he was an intelligence agent and his worldwide reputation," she said, speaking with genuine devotion. "He was a marvellous man. I never met another like him."

Although the book, the last of dozens written about the most famous double agent this century, does not expose any new espionage sensations, it does go some way to explaining how a senior member of the British establishment had to adapt to an alien existence in Soviet Russia. Mrs Philby

said that her husband appreciated the country he had left and the country because of his love of Russian culture and literature and his knowledge about the country's history, despite the fact that his spoken Russian was never fluent.

The book is accompanied by photographs of Philby seen fishing, picnicking and touring across the Soviet Union and its East Bloc satellite states, including Bulgaria and Cuba.

It is also clear that he did not fit into Soviet society, was treated with suspicion by the KGB, where some feared he

was a triple agent, and missed his life in Britain. The book reveals that it was not until

• He missed little luxuries such as whisky and coarse-cut Oxford marmalade •

1977, 14 years after his arrival in Russia, that he was invited to visit the unknown headquarters of the Soviet secret police at Lubianka Square.

"He could not forget his homeland," said Mrs Philby, commenting on the spy's well-known love for whisky and *The Times* cricket reports. She was also reminded by former KGB agents present at the book launch how little luxuries, like "coarse-cut Oxford marmalade" and other delicacies unavailable in Russia, were routinely sent back to Philby's home in Moscow from agents based in London.

Nevertheless, she insisted that he never wanted to return home and that he realised that

he had attempted suicide. "Then in the 1960s he tried without success to take his own life, by slashing his veins," wrote his widow. "Once by accident I detected deep scars on his left wrist and I instinctively pulled back." She asked him what had happened, but Philby just took a sip of whisky and, in an unusual voice, replied: "We Communists must endure, be strong and never give in to weakness."

Despite the shaky start in Russia, Philby did gradually settle into life in his adopted homeland, where he was given a comfortable but modest flat near Pushkin Square in central Moscow. The KGB used him to brief new agents being sent to London and his analysis of the British establishment was always highly valued by Soviet intelligence.

Mrs Philby said that her husband was broadly in favour of the changes undertaken by Mikhail Gorbachev to reform the Soviet system in the perestroika years, but she



Rufina Philby signs a book about her life with a spy at its launch in Moscow. "I write about the real man, not the figure of legend," she said.

was certain that he would not have approved of the chaos and poverty of modern Russia under President Yeltsin's rule.

Three years ago she raised £150,000 by auctioning books and memorabilia at Sotheby's in London, when her widow's pension dropped to the equivalent of about £3 a month. It was very hard for me to part with those objects, but I could not survive any other way," she said.

Despite the sale of some

items, her husband's study today remains exactly the way it was when he died. Amid the books are two of his most cherished possessions: a picture of Che Guevara and another of the Hotel Normandie, his favourite bar in Beirut, from where he defected on a Soviet ship in 1963. The book may reveal more about Philby, but leaves open the mystery of why he betrayed his country. It will not be the last word on his life.

Antigua charges Welsh islander with murder bid

FROM DAVID ADAMS IN MIAMI

A WELSHMAN, Cyril "Taffy" Buffon, caretaker of Guiana Island, off Antigua's coast in the eastern Caribbean, has been charged with attempted murder after a shooting incident involving the brother of the country's leading politician.

Mr Buffon, 73, from Brecon,

Powys, is accused of shooting his lawyer, Vere Bird Jr, the brother of Antigua's Prime Minister, Lester Bird, after an argument in his legal chambers on Tuesday. Mr Bird Jr had been representing Mr Buffon in a long-running dispute with the Government over its efforts to evict him and his wife, Bonny Buffon, from the island which has been their home for 32 years.

Mr Bird Jr, 61, remained in hospital yesterday with a bullet lodged in his throat in a statement issued from his hospital bed in St John's, the Antiguan capital, he accused Mr Buffon of shooting him. He said: "Buffon was very depressed and desolate. He reached into his pocket and pulled a gun and shot me."

The altercation occurred soon after the Antigua and Barbuda parliament passed a Bill to evict the Buffons from Guiana to make way for a \$300 million (£184 million) tourist resort proposed by a Malaysian investor. Work on the project is to begin next month.

Friends of Mr Buffon say the circumstances of the shooting remain unclear. "I don't think Taffy went there to kill him," Winston Derrick, editor of *The Daily Observer*, said.

"Maybe he pulled out the gun in frustration and it went off accidentally in a struggle."

The Buffons, who grew up in Brecon, moved to Guiana in the 1950s to manage the island for its owner, Alexander Hamilton-Hill, a British lawyer. At one time they supervised 120 cotton pickers.

In its heyday, the island attracted nobility, including Princess Margaret and the Earl of Snowdon who visited during their honeymoon in 1961. On the death of their benefactor, the estate was sold but the Buffons clung to a five-acre property where they lived in a ramshackle building, relied on rain for water and car batteries to power electricity. They had no telephone.

Supporters of the Buffons, who have nurtured the wildlife on the island, especially the fallow deer, are critical of the "Asian Village" resort deal. They say it represents a "giveaway" of Antiguan land.

The Prime Minister says the project is necessary to bring jobs to Antigua. With 2,000 hotel rooms eventually planned, the Asian Village promises to be one of the largest developments in the Eastern Caribbean. The developer, Tan Kay Hock, hopes to build a "playground of the rich and famous". The island will house six resorts, a 40,000 sq ft casino and beach-front rooms offering guests "your own private piece of ocean". Environmentalists say the project will endanger wildlife, including the West Indies whistling duck and the tropical mockingbird.

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than any
recent
Hollywood
product."
Nigel Kendall
TIME OUT

"Pierce
Brosnan is
perfect...
cracking
sexual
energy."
Ryan Gilbey
THE INDEPENDENT

Tomorrow Never Dies

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Children who were freed by the gunman after their ordeal at the Rigsbee Child Development Centre holding hands as they are escorted yesterday to an elementary school to receive counselling by chaplains and social workers

FLOR CORDERO / REUTERS

Gunman holds two sons hostage in Dallas siege

More child and adult hostages have been freed as the standoff enters its second day. Giles Whittell writes

A WEALTHY Dallas suburb was reeling from shock yesterday after a gunman took 61 children and six adults hostage in a day-care centre. As the incident entered a second day, the two captives remaining were the gunman's son and stepson.

The gunman, identified as James Monroe Lipscomb, released most of the hostages in groups of up to 20 as police lay siege to the day-care centre in Plano on Wednesday afternoon. Friends concluded that he had "flipped" because of marital problems.

Elite tactical units arrived from Dallas yesterday to replace exhausted police who had manned a cordon round the Rigsbee Child Development Centre throughout Wednesday night. Bruce Glasscock, Plano police chief, said: "We are in for a long haul. We will be here as long as there is any chance of bringing out any more of the hostages."

The incident began soon after 3pm on Wednesday when a gunman botched a robbery attempt at a cash dispensing machine outside a branch of the Plano Bank and Trust near the day-care centre, 20 miles north of Dallas. He then ran into the centre brandishing a handgun.

"We were hiding in the closet from him," said Kelli Burden, nine, after her release. "When he entered he was yelling curse-words at us."

Among those able to flee Mr Lipscomb's hostage-taking was his estranged wife, Kristen Shaw. She worked at the centre and had words with him there in recent weeks, one of her colleagues said.

Most of the hostages, including dozens of toddlers were freed in groups of be-

tween ten and 20 during the afternoon and night. Distraught parents rushed to the centre on hearing of the incident and prayed in groups during the tense hours between developments. One woman was shown on local television breaking down uncontrollably when told her child was being held captive.

As helicopters from police SWAT teams and local news stations hovered over the centre, parents and children who were reunited were offered counselling by chaplains and social workers at a nearby elementary school.

Some children emerged red-eyed from crying, but none appeared to have been injured; some seemed unaware of the danger, having been allowed to watch videos. "He

said he was not going to harm anyone," said Kelli. One child's first words to his mother were: "Mum, I am hungry."

Police negotiators set up a hot-line to Mr Lipscomb and kept him talking through the night, but it was unclear yesterday what, if any, demands he had made. Though officials refused to confirm his name, Mr Lipscomb was identified as the suspect by friends and family.

His nephew, Terrance Shaw, 15, related a recent conversation in which his uncle gave a warning that "a moment of madness can lead to a lifetime of sadness. You get mad at somebody and you go out there and shoot them. Right now, he is not in his right mind," the teenager said.

Others who knew Mr Lipscomb as a reasonable man were equally baffled. "I don't know what made him flip," said Oreta Griggs, a friend of his wife. "This is out of character. He's a kind person."

Briana Stanner, a former neighbour, said: "I don't know why he would do anything like this. He has never done anything like it before."

Mr Lipscomb, 33, who owns his own janitorial business, moved out of a house he shared with his immediate family and up to nine others last month after a row with his wife. Friends said the couple were planning to divorce.

His two children, Xavier, 8, his stepson, and Monroe, 4, still being held captive, had been with their mother at the day care centre. They had tried to leave as the others were being freed, witnesses said.

But their father stopped them, yelling, "Get back here,

get back here". The six adults taken hostage were released early in the siege, a fourth shortly before midnight and two more at 4am yesterday.

Ron Thompson, a father waiting for news of his child on Wednesday evening, said: "This guy's deranged. If I could exchange my life for the kids, I would do it."

The siege, without bloodshed so far, is the latest in a series of similar actions by distressed men who endanger the lives of innocents because of personal grudges. In 1991, 30 people were held hostage by four Thai gunmen in a California electronic store. In the same city, Sacramento, a single gunman held up 60

people in an eight-and-a-half hour siege at a high school the following year.

In 1988, James Harvey, a heavily armed fanatic protesting about the plight of the homeless in the United States, kidnapped 26 youngsters at a junior school in Tuscaloosa, Alabama. That siege ended without injury.

New curbs for Net data firms

FROM BRONWEN MADDOCK IN WASHINGTON

INTERNET data companies have hurriedly signed up to voluntary curbs on distributing personal information in a bid to head off new privacy laws by the Clinton Administration.

The move by 14 companies comes as a new report on Internet fraud revealed that the FBI had found cases of illegal access to computer

information or abuse of it had risen six-fold in the past five years. In September, a Maryland couple pleaded guilty to stealing the "identity" of hundreds of people by collecting their personal details off the Internet.

In the United States, three items of information — social security number, date of birth and mother's maiden name — are used in most everyday circumstances to establish a person's identity, allowing someone to get access to a bank account or credit rating, to set up telephone or electricity accounts and to apply for a driver's licence or credit card.

The agreement to restrict access does not apply to information generally available in public records such as court documents and marriage papers. All private information will still be available to law-enforcement agencies and some of it to law firms, banks and other businesses.

British stars dominate Golden Globes

KATE WINSLET. Helen Bonham Carter and Dame Judi Dench dominated the nominations for Best Actress in this year's Golden Globe awards, selected by the frequently-criticised Hollywood Foreign Press Association and traditionally a guide to the year's Oscar winners.

Winslet's nomination was one of eight for James Cameron's three-hour epic, *Titanic*, which was also nominated for Best Dramatic Film, Best Actor and Best Director. *Titanic*'s rivals for Best Dramatic Film are Steven Spielberg's *Amistad*, *The Boxer*, starring Daniel Day-Lewis, *Good Will Hunting* and *LA*

Confidential. Nominees for the year's Best Comedy or Musical include *As Good as it Gets*, which stars Jack Palance in his most acclaimed role in years, *My Best Friend's Wedding*, *Wag The Dog*, and *Men in Black*.

The Best Actress category also includes Jody Foster and Jessica Lange for their roles in *Contact* and *A Thousand Acres* respectively. Ms Bonham Carter is thought to be a favourite for the prize, having won two Best Actress awards so far from the Los Angeles and New York Film Critics Associations.

Kate Winslet's co-star in *Titanic*,

Leonardo Di Caprio, won a nomination for Best Actor, as did Daniel Day-Lewis, who plays an Irish pugilist in *The Boxer*. Djimon Hounsou, the slaves' leader in *Amistad*, Peter Finch in an acclaimed comeback role in *Ulee's Gold*, and Matt Damon, Hollywood's latest matinee idol and the star of *Good Will Hunting*.

The Golden Globes will be presented in a ceremony televised live on January 18. Even though they are voted on by just 90 film reporters, only 60 per cent of whom are full-time journalists, the Golden Globes have won increasing clout with the studios.



Winslet: one of the eight nominations for *Titanic*

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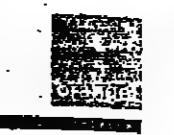
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Clinton offers talks on peace process

Clinton offers talks on peace process

By MICHAEL BINYON, DIPLOMATIC EDITOR

PRESIDENT CLINTON is to kick-start the Middle East peace process by inviting the Israeli and Palestinian leaders to meet him in Washington next month.

Madeleine Albright announced this yesterday after meeting Benjamin Netanyahu, the Israeli Prime Minister, in Paris and Yasser Arafat, President of the Palestine Authority, in London. She said Mr Clinton would see the two men separately.

Underlining her sense of urgency in pushing forward the faltering peace process, she said the two leaders had to understand that it was up to them to make the hard decisions. "We have been offering ideas and suggestions and the right environment, but the key to progress is for the leaders themselves to make decisions." In Paris, Mr Netanyahu showed Ms Albright maps of the areas from which he said Israeli troops would not withdraw for security reasons. She urged him to do what he could to focus on the "practical aspects" of further redeployment, but did not comment publicly on the Israel Cabinet's failure to put forward an agreed plan for withdrawal, despite her earlier insistence that it should outline its plans before Christmas. She said that the peace



Yasser Arafat with Robin Cook in London yesterday

logue with the United States.

■ Jerusalem: A human rights group here has accused Yasser Arafat's administration of a cover-up over the deaths of 18 Arabs in his jails through torture or neglect (Ross Dunn writes).

Bassam Eid, director of the Palestinian Human Rights Monitoring Group, said the only way to prevent more deaths was for Palestinians to begin public protests.

How Europe sees Britain: Sieg for Blair or shut up

FROM CHARLES BREMNER IN BRUSSELS

TONY BLAIR has promised to bring Europe closer to the people when Britain takes the presidency of the European Union next month, but the Government's message of "greater transparency" risks backfiring, thanks to the heavy-handed tactics of its media managers.

For six months, continental journalists have been both amused and irritated by the combative antics with which the Government's new Labour spokesmen try to limit information and keep the foreign media "on message". However a knock-about performance by the spin doctors at last week's Luxembourg summit is causing the continental media and EU officials to wonder about the Government's ability to handle the task of supplying neutral information during the presidency.

Some officials at the Council of Ministers in Brussels are also worried that the Government may be trying to gag EU spokesmen, although this is denied by the Foreign Office. "They don't seem to understand that we have to give more than just the British version of events here," said an EU official.

The chief culprit, in the eyes of continental journalists as well as British officials, is Alastair Campbell, the Prime Minister's pugnacious press spokesman. A former tabloid journalist, Mr Campbell treats his Euro-outings like forays into hostile territory and takes an apparent pride in his unfamiliarity with the subject. "You could say the rudeness didn't matter if the guy gave wonderful information, but he actually doesn't know anything," said a continental EU correspondent.

Next in line is Charlie Whelan, the spokesman for Gordon Brown, the Chancellor, a man who likes to dismiss EU issues as "Eurobollocks" and tells journalists he would not deign to bring his minister "down here to talk to this lot". The other EU states leave their briefings from the closed council sessions to the ministers themselves. Mr Whelan earned Brussels fame in an incident last month in which he landed a punch on the *Financial Times* man in the Council.

The gladiatorial and flippant conduct of Messrs Campbell and Whelan may hail from the rough and tumble of the British lobby

tradition but the manner does not translate into the more delicate context of the EU. "The bully-boy tactics don't travel well," noted a BBC correspondent. Questions from non-Britons, especially in poor English, are often dismissed with something approaching contempt. Spanish reporters rebelled after one exchange in which Mr Campbell, who holds a Cambridge language degree, said he did not understand their questions, in English, and refused to answer their inquiries. "He laughed at us. It was very surprising," said Carlos Segovia, correspondent for *El Mundo*.

Summing up the British spin doctors at the Luxembourg summit, Pierre Bozzo, the Europe correspondent for *Le Figaro*, said: "If they wanted to be disliked, they could hardly do it in a better way. It's real arrogance."

After one bruising exchange with the British spokesman at Luxembourg, Christian Wernicke, correspondent for *Die Zeit*, said: "They've got used to owning their country. They've started to think they own Europe as well."

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A girl cries during a blood test to check for avian flu at her kindergarten in Hong Kong yesterday. There are nine confirmed cases.

Boy, 2, becomes latest victim of avian flu

FROM JONATHAN MURRAY
IN HONG KONG

A BOY aged two yesterday became the ninth confirmed victim of avian flu in Hong Kong, where two people have already died from the disease.

The World Health Organisation sought yesterday to calm international fears of a pandemic with a statement saying that such a danger "is not yet established".

Of the two dead, a small boy in Hong Kong's New Territories is the only person known to have directly contracted the virus. The Princess Margaret Hospital in

Hong Kong health officer said he was unaware that 1,000 chickens had died in the local Cheung Sha Wan wholesale chicken market on December 12.

The market was reopened yesterday after a three-day cleansing operation at the request of traders, but sales, usually of more than 80,000 chickens a day, were down by 80 per cent, even though prices had been halved.

The public now refuses to eat chicken in restaurants; and Chinese chickens require certificates that they are virus-free. Reports on the gravity of the crisis vary. The Princess Margaret Hospital in

Hong Kong attempted to calm fears here — during a period of ever greater than usual air pollution — by noting that not all coughing indicates the flu. The avian virus, it said, is only transmitted at distances of up to 3ft.

But the Princess Margaret is the only hospital here with a 20-bed infectious disease ward, and Dr Andrew Yip, spokesman for the Hong Kong Public Doctors Association, has warned that the number of isolation beds may be inadequate if there is a sudden surge in cases.

Two cousins of a five-year-old girl ill with the avian virus may

have caught it directly from her, but this is not yet certain. The girl attended a nursery school with a playground fouled by chicken feathers and flesh. Some other children in the nursery are reported ill with flu, but it is not known whether it is the virus H5N1, previously confined to birds.

□ Taipei Taiwan's Council of Agriculture yesterday told customs officers to crack down on the smuggling of chickens from mainland China. The country's Health Department warned tourists going to Hong Kong not to visit poultry markets or bird parks because of avian flu. (AP)

Warring burger giants put chips on front line

FROM TOM RHODES
IN WASHINGTON

AMERICA'S largest purveyors of fast food formally declared war on each other yesterday in the Battle of the Favourite Fry.

McDonald's, the world's biggest fast-food chain, has issued combat guidelines to its more than 12,000 restaurants in the US urging a counter-attack against an attempt by Burger King to gain superiority in the American chips market. In a memorandum entitled "Keep Your Eyes on Our Fry", Jack Greenberg, the chairman of McDonald's USA, ordered employees to staff their fry stations all day long,

check the times and temperatures three times daily and remember, above all, to salt their chips properly. "As we prepare to go head-to-head we're operating from a huge strategic advantage because everyone knows that McDonald's has the best fries — bar none," said Mr Greenberg in Churchillian tones. "I don't have to tell you that this is our best opportunity to stop Burger King in its tracks and thwart its strategy of copying us to steal market share."

The counter-offensive by McDonald's reflects the company's growing anxiety over poor American results amid increasingly aggressive competition. Burger King Corp., a wholly owned subsidiary of Britain's Grand Metropoli-

itan, first introduced Big King, a Big Mac clone that has proved extremely popular. McDonald's responded with an item identical to Burger King's Whopper.

The real war is about to begin. Burger King last week launched its new-look chips with a \$70 million (£42.7 million) campaign, touting the first Friday in January as national "Free Fry-Day", during which Americans can sample the latest delicacy. "It looks like McDonald's is acknowledging that we are taking over," said Kim Miller, of Burger King. "But I think the consumer is the real winner in the fast food war." Burger King's US market share is 19.2 per cent, with McDonald's on 41.9 per cent.

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THE SUNDAY TIMES IS THE SUNDAY PAPERS

Business warms to Mbeki as whites deplore 'racist' Mandela



Mandela: said whites are clinging to the past

FROM SAM KILEY
IN MAPEKING

PRESIDENT MANDELA'S attack on whites for failing to grasp the benefits of a "non-racial democracy" and continuing to cling to apartheid-era privileges has exposed wide divisions in the white population.

White-dominated parties lambasted his criticisms of them as smacking of racism and intellectual dishonesty. Mr Mandela made his comments at the 50th conference of the African National Congress this week. But big business, which also came in for a drubbing in his valedictory address, reacted

to the election of his successor, Thabo Mbeki, with enthusiasm, leading to a surge in prices on the Johannesburg Stock Exchange.

The exchange, defying predictions that Mr Mandela's suggestion that corporations should be subjected to institutionalised scrutiny of their activities and their social impact would create market jitters, rose by 111 points the day after his speech on Tuesday.

A spokesman for the Johannesburg Chamber of Commerce, which ends tomorrow, had made it clear that the ANC-dominated Government was going to stick to macroeconomic policies. "There is clearly no

threat of inflationary tendencies or damaging labour legislation so we are perfectly happy with the status quo."

In his speech, Mr Mandela accused the National Party, the Democratic Party and the Freedom Front of seeking to preserve white privilege at the expense of "transformation". The 53-page speech was long on rhetoric but it did not point to legislation for greater affirmative action programmes or tax increases.

Business Day, South Africa's leading financial daily, had much of the speech. "The perception is that whites consider they have done their bit by 'allowing'

majority rule in April 1994. They are seen as loath to take full responsibility for, and address, the sins of the past, and to have retreated into a social and economic laisser," the newspaper commented yesterday.

"Many whites construe ANC attempts to broaden access to schooling and healthcare as a threat ... The lesson from Zimbabwe, where 1,500 mainly white-owned farms have been seized for seizure [by Robert Mugabe's Government], is that by isolating themselves, whites set themselves up as targets and scapegoats. They have a long-term interest in embracing the current changes and

making them work," it said. But the speech was attacked by the white-dominated National Party, which has introduced apartheid in 1948, for its "underlying racist tone". In a statement, it said: "The abrasive and divisive language, the very unconvincing and somewhat paranoid conspiracy theories ... make

deceasing reading."

One issue continues to worry the party hierarchy. Although Winnie Madikizela-Mandela, who has been implicated in cases of abduction and murder, rejected a nomination for deputy president of the ANC, her name remains on the ballot for election to the National Executive Committee.

"If she comes anywhere in the top ten she will be an embarrassment to the ANC. If she comes in the top five, she will be a major embarrassment and the ANC may be splashed by its own spittoon," David Welsh, Professor of Politics at Cape Town university, said.

Leading article, page 21

Sithole is freed on bail after bungled death plot

By JAN RAATH IN HARARE
AND OUR FOREIGN STAFF

THE frail and forgetful former Zimbabwean revolutionary, Ndabaningi Sithole, 77, was sentenced to two years in jail yesterday for a conspiracy to blow up President Mugabe that was so "amateurish" that it was "doomed to fail".

Judge Esmael Chatikobe said he wanted to avoid sending Sithole to jail, but Zimbabwean law on treason gave him no option. However, he immediately released him on bail to appeal against the conviction, and urged President Mugabe to grant him clemency. Sithole also received a suspended five-year sentence for two other counts of possessing arms and of promoting terrorism to overthrow an elected government.

Sithole, leader of the small opposition Zanu (Ndonga) par-



Sithole after being sentenced in Harare yesterday. He said that security agents had fabricated the charges

ty, was convicted two weeks ago of trying to raise an army to overthrow the Zimbabwe Government, possession of weapons and plotting to assassinate Mr Mugabe. He was arrested after the collapse of the plot when an unarmed on-duty soldier spotted Sithole's chief would-be assassin alone at the side of the road with a bomb in his hand, and apprehended him.

"There never was a chance of the plan succeeding," said the judge. "It was so amateurish one cannot but wonder what it was meant to fail." He said that from the start, Sithole's group was infiltrated by a member of the Zimbabwean secret police.

Many of the men forcibly recruited into "Chimurengwa" (Ndau vernacular for spark;

the barely operational military wing of his party, absconded at the first opportunity and reported to the Zimbabwean authorities.

The naivety of the chief assassin was "mind-boggling," the judge said. The bomb was a claymore anti-personnel mine and there was no possibility of it even injuring Mr Mugabe as he swept past in the heavy presidential Mercedes-Benz limousine.

Sithole glowered at the judge when he heard himself described as "old, frail and looking tired and broken-down". Earlier, his personal physician, Dr Christopher Nutt, said Sithole suffered high blood pressure, angina, heart fibrillation and diabetes. He said his patient was on a

range of drugs, but regularly forgot to take his medication and was incapable of following a diet low in fat and protein.

He gave Sithole up to eight years to live, but said he would probably die much sooner if he was sent to prison.

Sithole said after being sentenced that the fact that the court had failed to prove that

he plotted to kill Mugabe and that no weapons were found at his home showed that the charges were fabricated by security agents.

"All that this amounts to is that the frightened Government had written out its transcript and had followed it very carefully," he said, alleging that the judge had no choice but to follow the plan.

Political refugees fear Kanu attacks before Kenya poll

FROM DAVID ORR IN MOMBASA

MORE than 80 people are still encamped in the grounds of the Cathedral of the Holy Ghost in Mombasa after their homes on the coast were burnt down in August. Their makeshift tents are dwarfed by the concrete and glass high-rise buildings of the city centre.

It is an unusual sight for Africa, where most refugee and displaced persons' camps are found on hillsides or strewn across open country-side.

"We have been told by the authorities to go back to Likoni," says Ruth Adhiambo, an up-country fish seller who settled at Likoni on the Kenyan coast with her husband and children four years ago. "But we're afraid because of the elections. We prefer to stay in town until they're over."

The August attacks, in which gangs shot and hacked to death at least 100 people, are believed to have been politically motivated. Now, with general elections due on December 29, many people like Mrs Adhiambo fear that violence could erupt again.

It seems the crimes of Mrs Adhiambo and the thousands of others who were made homeless in this region are twofold. First, they are outsiders who have managed to establish small but successful businesses on the coast. Second, they are from ethnic groups seen as being opposed to the ruling Kanu party of

President Moi. "It's true, we're opposition supporters," says Mrs Adhiambo, 32, a Luo from western Kenya whose sympathies lie with the Luo-dominated National Democratic Party. "After they attacked us at night with machetes and petrol bombs, they left leaflets saying 'Give us back our land and leave here. You have seven days'."

In Kenya's first multiparty elections in 1992, Kanu swept the board in Coast province, except in Mombasa, where it secured only one constituency. It is up-country people like Mrs Adhiambo who are held responsible by Kanu hardliners for the Government's defeat in Likoni and two other constituencies. "There's no doubt it was local Kanu MPs who incited the violence here in August," says Father Ernest Munua, vicar-general of the Catholic diocese of Mombasa.

The August raids were followed by a series of brutally repressive swoops by the security forces. In these operations, locals and up-country people suffered alike. Reports of beatings and rapes by the police circulate freely.

"There's no doubt Kanu will lose votes because of the abuses by the security forces," says Father Munua, who is distributing leaflets exhorting his congregation not to resort to violence in the election run-up. "The police are behaving responsibly now but that was not the case in August."

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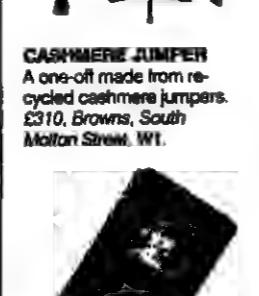
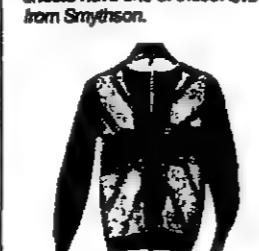
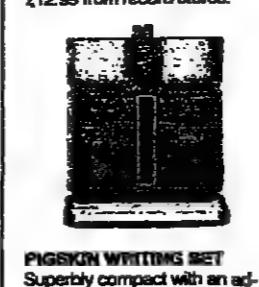
■ Don't ruin an evening dress by putting your work coat on top. Invest in this electric blue opera coat in devon or plain velvet. Soft to the touch, it is so light it feels like an air-filled eiderdown.
£259 by Nicole Cadine at Fenwicks, New Bond Street W1. Tel: 0171 629 9161.

■ This versatile tiara can be worn as a crown, an ornate hairband or a choker. It also comes in multi-coloured stones, pearl or with lizards and fish woven into the metal frame.
Red beaded wire tiara, from £50 by Noel at Joanne's Tent, 2980 Kings Road SW3. Tel: 0171-352 1151.

■ A silver pencil case and matching pencils must be the ultimate in disposable decadence. The pencil case is sleek and extremely heavy (best kept on the desk) and lined in black suede. While the silver pencils are beautiful to behold, they are not refillable.
Silver pencil case, £730 and silver pencils, £26 each by Clive Burn at Hennell of Bond Street, 12 New Bond Street W1. Tel: 0171-629 6888.

Compiled by DEBORAH BRETT

SIX OF THE BEST
Forget socks, ties and aftershave this Christmas. Here we present six of the best gift ideas for men.



Three way favourite



An easy way to stand out with style and to save money is to buy one dress and transform it. Monsoon has designed a beautiful black lace crocheted dress - it costs at £250. If that's a little too expensive, then with a little thought you can create a look for less.

Gold & Silver sequins, a plain lace-trimmed bodice with a lace belt, a William lace - very Dolce and Gabbana - and a black silk will create the classic 1950s black dress. Black leather crocheted dress, £250, Monsoon, 10-22 Argyle Street, W1. 0171 278 3492. Plain and gold lace-trimmed silk £15. Black lace from Monsoon, 10-22 Argyle Street, W1. 0171 278 3492. Plain and gold lace-trimmed silk £15. Black lace from Monsoon, 10-22 Argyle Street, W1. 0171 278 3492.

Photographer: Ryan Sutherland, Stylist: Deborah Brett; Hair: Cara McMurtry; Make-up: Joëlle Fuchs; Model: Angeline

■ Lulu Guinness beaded bag - small, massive, and perfect to dress up any outfit. Part of an exclusive range for Deborah (available at selected stores). £40.

■ Cashmere jumper: appear blousy yet look like you're attention towards your dress. £45 by Sacha, 247 Old Bond Street, W1. Tel: 0171-436 1467.

■ Bronze embroidered gloves are the best way to turn a simple look or dress into something opulent enough for evening. £300 by Georgina von Etzdorf, 50 Burlington Arcade, W1. Tel: 0171-409 7726.

I'm the one in a mistletoe tiara

I have never really been able to get all that worked up about what is supposed to be the worst fashion disaster that can ever befall a girl — finding yourself at a fearfully grand party to which some other woman has worn the exact same outfit.

This is probably just as well. If, like me, you are a stranger to the couturier's atelier, and dress yourself on an annual budget of about £500 from the lower reaches of the high street, then you get fairly hardened to running into your sartorial *doppelgänger* — some other sharp-eyed pauper who has also spotted the brilliant, V-necked, dip-dyed, Gucci knock-off for one tenth of the designer price — and even learn to treat the experience with a certain grace. "Oh, you've discovered it too," one cries. "Isn't it heavenly. And such a tremendous bargain... I've bought one in every colour..."

Meanwhile, of course, one is giving her the beady-eyed once-over, to see what else she has got on, and how she has pulled the look together.

The secret of dressing well is not where you get your clothes from, but what you do with them. Frankly, if you run into your husband's mistress or your lover's wife at the ball of the century and find that she is wearing the same frock, that isn't a disaster. The disaster is if she is wearing it with more wit, style and panache than

CUTTING EDGE JANE SMILLIE

You should find yourself in such a delicate situation, your first thought (apart from a mental note to tell your *veneuse* that henceforth you will be dressing elsewhere) must be to check out her accessories: what's that around her neck? Where are those earrings from? Is that a real emerald? And what does she have on her feet?

For an outfit, especially a party outfit, depends heavily on its accessories. Their job is to reveal the little flashes of your personality that can illuminate an entire look. They don't have to be terribly expensive, though it is worth making the odd serious investment.

For the price of a not especially nice dress, the glorious Georgina von Etzdorf scarf on this page would make a hop sack look good. (She does a version in black organza with white embroidery that would have much the same effect on a black plastic bin liner.)

A little beaded evening bag from Lulu Guinness, or a pair of teetering Manolo Blahnik

Wit, style and panache — the pauper's secret to dressing well

mules will lend distinction to a very modest dress.

But the high street is full of treasures, too. Monsoon's velvet-trimmed angora cardigan, for example, stabbed with Harrods' paste star hat pins or the glass slippers from *Sacha* shown here. They are not exactly robust, and may

well disappear, after a few outings, like Cinderella's fairy mice, but they are pretty, witty and, at £45, a bargain.

If I were feeling very flush, I would take myself off to Harvey Nichols and buy Cherry Chavis' silvery mistletoe tiara from *Sacha* in the hope that someone might kiss me under it. But

even on Scrooge's budget I can sparkle satisfactorily in square-cut fake aquamarine earrings and pendants from Wallis — plain, elegant and set in sterling silver, for less than £20.

So if, as I suspect, Santa fails yet again this year to slip into my stocking an adequate number of diamonds, at least I shall know how to make up for it: ingenuity, character and a fistful of well-chosen rhinestones.

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The perfect Christmas man is clever, funny and likeable.

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It ought to be a law of nature, an generally it is true, that if ever a woman needed a man it is for those 48 hours from Christmas Eve to Boxing Day when she goes home to her family. Because it does not seem to matter how liberated and feminist a family is, the sight of an unmarried daughter will always get them worried. And a Worried Parent (as I know now, having had children myself) is a terrible thing.

On the other hand, bring home a powerful, personable young man (and for these purposes the more powerful the better — the head of the Sicilian Mafia would do very nicely) and you will find that your parents are easing out of your hand. Families are very primitive about these matters, and especially at Christmas when nature abhors a single woman — and so will your parents. As the advertisement for the RSPCA so very nearly said: "A man is for Christmas, not just for life."

My own transformation into a Spinster took place alarmingly early. One minute I was the

A man is for Christmas, not for life, says **Rachel Morris**. And the more powerful and more personable he is, the better

Daughter-Who-Had-Going-To-University-And-Was-Doing-Very-Nicely and the next minute (somewhere in my late twenties) they were shaking their heads over my single status.

It didn't help that my brothers were getting married and having children, a change of lifestyle that brought about a delightful improvement in their position. Suddenly they were given the biggest bedrooms, their opinions were taken seriously, cheques were being written discreetly on their behalf and their children were being passed from lap to lap with much murmuring and cooing.

I, meanwhile, was doing the washing up and having to endure heads shaken over my new haircut

(of which I was very fond) and my new boots (bought at great expense). It's not easy being a family spinster, even if I was a fresh-faced 27-year-old.

It is not that my family are monsters. Really, quite the contrary. It is just that, feminists though they are, they do tend to fall into line when there is a man about. And so, in my experience, what every woman needs this Christmas is a man to stay her family with his power, his personality and his appeal. I can still remember the relief with which I fell into the arms of my husband-to-be. It was December, and as soon as I decently could I broached the subject: "Can you save me from Christmas?"

All of which makes me wonder

why no one has ever set up the Christmas Husband Agency. You can picture the scene. You pick him up on Christmas Eve at a pre-arranged time on your way to your parents' house in the country. He's clever, funny and likeable. He talks money with your father, does the washing-up with your mother, plays chess with your grandmother (and allows her to beat him) and computer games with your brother (and beats him hollow).

Finally, on Boxing Day, after a suitably late breakfast, he will tell your parents that you really have got back to London, and, bundling you into the car, will drive you to the nearest motorway service station (it being the only place open) where he will listen patiently while you unload on to him 35 years of fury and outrage. And then, with just a peck on the cheek, he will get up and walk out of your life forever.

Or not, perhaps. Because, of course, you may decide that a man should be for life, not just for Christmas. In which case all you need to do is smile sheepishly and he will instantly order two more coffees and suggest a film and dinner.

"Dream on," say my friends. "dream on." But it seems to me that if we can get a man on the moon (not to mention a divorce settlement for the Spencers) it should be possible for someone to create a Christmas Husband Agency.

MARTIN BEDDALL

'If Mrs Maita weren't so nice, I'd throttle her'

The brains behind Tamagotchi, the virtual cyberpet, is a schoolgirlish slip of a woman. Moira Petty interviews Aki Maita

If I could have a one-to-one with anybody, it wouldn't be John Lennon or James Joyce — it would be whoever invented the blasted cyberpet. I shrieked recently. I must have been pulling on a wishebone, because here I was face to face with the brains behind the Tamagotchi, the original virtual pet.

Mrs Aki Maita, 32, from being some kind of high-tech Professor Branestawm, is a fragile schoolgirlish slip of a thing. So it was hard to give her a piece of my mind, especially when my invective had to be channelled through an interpreter.

I tried to tell her that since July our household has been punctuated by beeps and electronic whines and that I have been forced into an unwanted acquaintance with the most intimate physical functions of my daughter's two cyberpets. By night, her bedroom

sounds like an intensive care ward. By day, she is the assiduous attendant of the little pets, pressing buttons to appease their hunger, mete out discipline or take them to the toilet, the result of which is delightfully illustrated on the liquid crystal screen as steaming triangular piles.

When Lily, 10, first demanded a virtual pet, Mrs Maita nonchalantly said, "We have no nice, well-cared-for golden retrievers and six cats. Negotiations took place at Bent Cross shopping centre, North London. The computer-generated creatures exist on another dimension, she told me; she was the only child in the world without one. Then there was a dramatic shower of tears and I was the target of cross-mother snubs by other shoppers.

Hoping she would have tired of its infernal demands by the end of summer, I gave it to her. A few weeks later her father bought her a second. Now she

Mrs Maita is not, as has been reported, a housewife who invented the Tamagotchi to satisfy her children's wish for a pet. She has worked for Bandai, the Japanese toy and leisure company, for seven years, as part of the prosaically-named Planning Section, Toy Entertainment Division, Department.

"I look at the market. What is the trend? What do people want?" says Mrs Maita. "It has been pet boom in Japan. Traditionally we have cats and dogs. But in pet boom we get alternative pets: fish, marmosets, ferrets."

As the households are small and many people are allergic to pets, I thought we could adapt the idea as a toy. After pet boom we have another boom in portable goods. You open any handbag and you will find telephone, pager, GameBoy or even smaller TV or radio."

There was a moral component, too. "I thought it would be great to teach children the pleasure of caring. The more you care for it, the better the animal you see on the screen."

And what about the cross-parents who will say that cyberpets disturb bedtime meals, homework and have been banned by many schools? Well, said Mrs Maita, all Tamagotchi have a pause button.

A jab of the button and I sent Roman to a virtual cemetery

By the end of the year, one million Tamagotchi will have been sold in the UK, 36 million worldwide. The makers claim it is the best-selling toy ever.

Bandai has had previous hits, such as Power Rangers, but in the year to March 31, 1997, recorded losses of £40 million.

The company was on the point of merging with the games giant, Sega, until Mrs Maita had her brainwave.

Launched in Japan in November 1996, the Tamagotchi craze has reversed Bandai's fortunes.

Did Mrs Maita not regret having gone solo with her idea, which would have made her a yet multimillionaire? "Yes, it was my idea," she said, with a bird-like flutter of her hands. "But I couldn't have invented it without my years of experience with the company." The Bandai boffin must have been well rewarded by her employers?

"Our bonuses are paid in April and it was too early last April to recognise my contribution." Was she expecting a fat payday next April? A tinkle of laughter.

For every authentic Tamagotchi on sale, there are estimated to be four or five copycat cyberpets. Unlike the Japanese, the British are not brand loyal, says Mrs Maita with some disapproval.

Tamagotchi has become a generic term for the cult but copyright laws here are unable to deal with the problem in the way Bandai would like. The original was devised over a two-year period, in a Far Eastern factory, it can be taken apart and copied overnight.

Brands such as the controversial Kipniko, which features a foster child, have been wrongly linked to Tamagotchi. But children themselves are capable of subverting the idea, in Japan,

boys have tried to kill off their pet as quickly as possible by overdoing the snack and discipline buttons.

In Hong Kong, a Triad virtual pet existed on a diet of cigarettes and alcohol, and was rewarded with knives, before the authorities there banned it. "With toys, there is always the risk that an innocent idea will be interfered with," says Mrs Maita sadly.

The original Tamagotchi is avoid, selling at around £9.99. There is no such word in Japanese, but tamago means egg and ichi has a variety of meanings, including baby or lovable. A variety of creatures may appear, depending on the nature of the care given. Some look like something you would find at a school for tropical medicine. Others would have you reaching for the bug spray.

The Tamagotchi was initially aimed at teenagers and young female workers, "who manipulate communication in Japan and are very powerful," says Mrs Maita. Next month in the UK the DigiMon, short for Digital Monster, arrives aimed at boys. By feeding it virtual protein, its owner will be rewarded by a cyberdog-of-war that can do battle with other Digi-Mons. Mrs Maita, somewhat unrealistically, emphasises the nurturing aspect. "Children are challenged to care for it so it grows into a strong boy."

In March, the more feminine Angel Tamagotchi, which arrives as a UFO and promises to look after its owner, goes on sale.

Mrs Maita works 12 hours a day at her job and plays golf in her spare time. She played with traditional toys as a child and admires she does not understand the technical side of her invention. When she has children she will "teach them the pleasures of Tamagotchi".

She says this charmingly that if I bite back the impulse to throttle her on behalf of beleaguered parents everywhere.



Aki Maita played with traditional toys as a child, but says that when she has children she will "teach them the pleasures of Tamagotchi"

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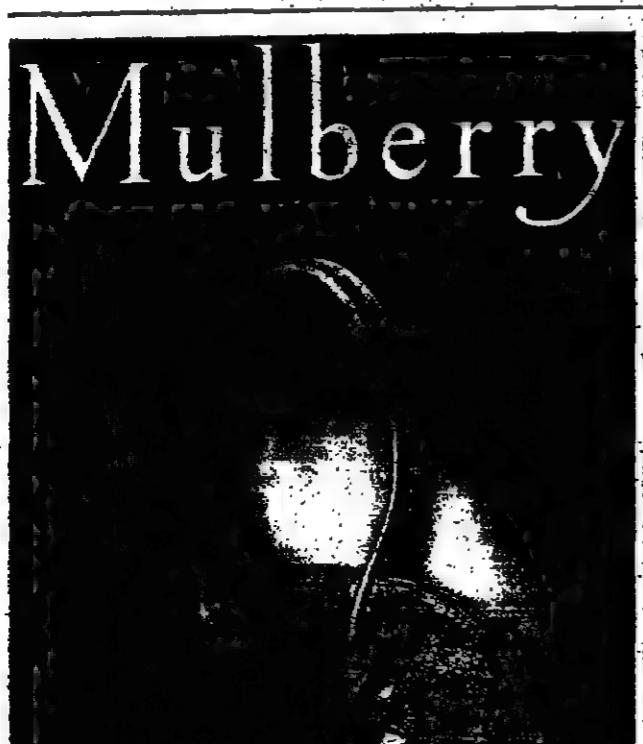
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Frank's modest proposal

Field aims to take the state out of welfare, says John Lloyd

On Tony says the Parliamentary Labour Party, we gathered golden opinions from the people only six months ago which would be worn in their newest gloss / not east aside so soon". Do not, dear leader, paint us as men and women who deprive the hard-pressed of any of the little they have, Let us seem to be carers and sharers for a little longer.

The plea falls on deaf ears. The Prime Minister has listened, sympathised (up to a point), respected (up to a point) the place of conscience and dissent. But, he told the PLP on Wednesday morning, "it is this party which built the welfare state and this Government that will save the welfare state". So stop whining and "explain what the Government is doing, and why."

Why is precisely the point. Tony Blair, off today on a reflective awayday at Chequers with his No 10 policy unit, still searches for a story to tell his party, his country and perhaps even himself. A story is the modern — or perhaps very old-fashioned — word for an ideology; an overarching rationale within which the main measures of government fit. Margaret

Thatcher had the fusion of the market and liberty, Blair has pocketed that as a given, and wants to move beyond it. But what is available?

From the drear caves of the Department of Social Security comes a voice, at once self-assured and self-deprecating, anxious to be of assistance. It belongs to Mr Frank Field, the department's Minister of State and licensed thinker on the Big Idea — which is the restructuring of the welfare state.

Mr Field, work extraordinaire of the pensions and social security worlds, member of the Church of England synod, lover of teasing flights of fancy and of intellectual explorations, has had a hard coming to Government. His relationship with Harriet Harman, his Secretary of State, is rancorous; she sees him as a burr under her saddle, he sees her as a (metaphorically) ugly sister who will stop him going to the ball. Gordon Brown at the Treasury regards him with dour suspicion, seeing in his rethinking of welfare a No 10-inspired challenge to his own domination of the process. Even No 10 is getting nuptial at the long gestation period of his welfare reform.

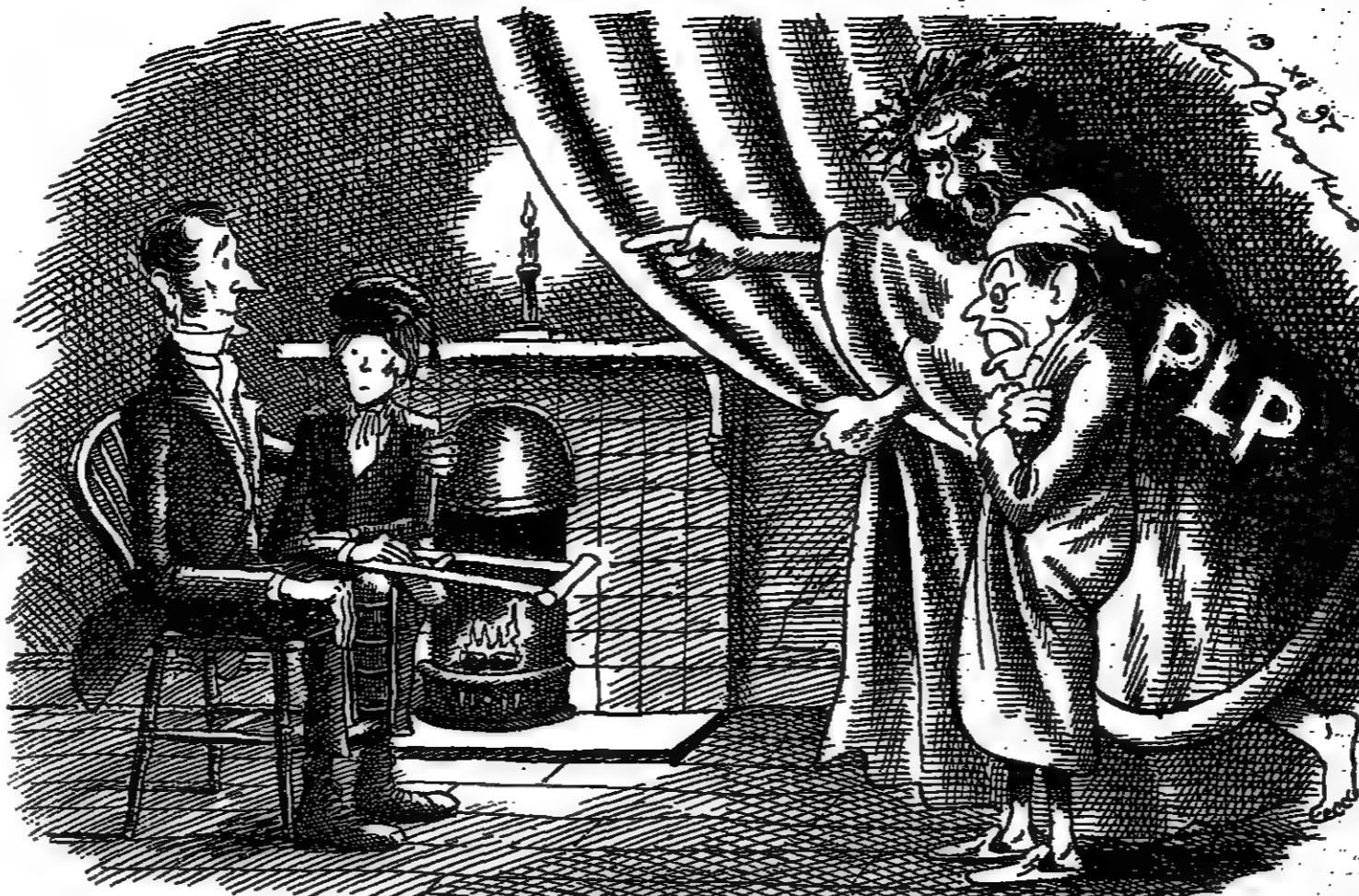
What does Mr Field have going for him? He will have a Green Paper on welfare reform out early next year. This, he believes, should not be a grand plan, but the clear beginning of a process of incremental change in welfare provision which will, bit by bit, win the trust of the population and reshape their expectations of what they get from the State.

Welfare reform, Mr Field believes, will take many parliaments to achieve — but since he also believes, unlike the Prime Minister, that the creation of the welfare state lies centuries back in the development of the Poor Law rather than with the Labour Governments of 1945-51, he

The author is associate editor of the New Statesman.

has a certain equanimity about a long timescale.

At the heart of his proposals



"If Tiny Tim be like to die, he had better do it, and decrease the surplus population." Scrooge hung his head to hear his own words quoted by the Spirit.
— *A Christmas Carol* (2)

None but the brave

We postulate too many watersheds in politics, but I feel another coming on. As the year closes it seems to me that Gordon Brown and Tony Blair really are approaching a watershed.

Watershed is a weary metaphor, its link to the original geographical reference already badly frayed. In topography a watershed is a line of separation between waters flowing to different rivers; a high point from which the rainfall may flow equally this way or that, but having chosen which can never return to the alternative course.

This is not socialism as it has come to be understood. But it is a narrative different from that of privatisation. It replaces that 1980s world with a new-old century one: co-operation.

New Labour has remained in touch with non-liberal opinion on social issues. The rhetoric on families is designed to appeal to it — even if, for the moment, it is little more than rhetoric.

The cuts on single-parent benefit have been supported by *The Sun* and *The Mirror* and *The Express*, not just because they are in varying degrees of thrall to the Government (as they are), but also because their readers are unlikely to feel too roused on behalf of unmarried mothers, who are seen as the authors of or collaborators in their own calamities. Welfare reform can gain and keep support — but only if the population is brought to feel some ownership of it.

But it is important to recall how uncertain it all felt at the time. At the time the Tory "wets" believed themselves to be — and looked to many — like the coming thing. Forgetting how precarious her position seemed, we find it hard now to recapture the excitement caused when Julian Critchley wrote an anonymous article "by a Tory MP" in *The Observer* criticising Mrs Thatcher's leadership. To a big group of Tory MPs, those early clouds around her leadership appeared less like the morning mist than the fog closing in. What now seems tough-minded then looked hard-hearted. Her strong leadership, as we see it, was dismissed as simon authoritarianism. Her wets, now derided as gnats that she swatted, stung like hornets.

In one of the rudest letters ever written politely, Samuel Johnson inveighs bitterly against a patron who "looks with unconcern on a Man struggling for life in the water, and when he has reached ground encounters him with help". There is, as poor Johnson discovered, a time-lag between the display of a quality and its recognition in the world. We call someone "brave" only after they have come to hold sway and need their courage less. There will have been a moment when they really were brave, but it will have occurred much

earlier, before their spurs were won. We begin calling people "original" at about the point they are starting to be famous and predictable. The time of their originality will have been an uncertain time. Thatcher was brave and original before the world acknowledged it; rather less so after her party had fallen at her feet.

This is the time for Tony Blair and Gordon Brown to be brave and original. It is their watershed year. By December next year we shall know whether this Labour Prime Minister is a man to be knocked off course by his party, as both his immediate predecessors, James Callaghan and Harold Wilson, were. If Blair and Brown back down on welfare reform, and if Labour starts sacrificing good, unpopular ministers such as Geoffrey Robinson to the mob, then the waters of this administration will be flowing towards a river which can take Labour's fate in only one direction. But if Blair manages to hold the line all through next year, his leadership will have passed a grueling test.

I am coming to believe that what Gerald Kaufman thinks today, others say tomorrow. It was at the last election but one that Mr Kaufman called the choice between Labour and the Tories a tug-of-war between fear and loathing; and it was at the last election that fear lost — overcome not, as Mr Blair boasts, by hope, but by loathing. On May 30 this year, writing in the *New Statesman*, Kaufman described the new Parliamentary Labour Party as "the happiest I have ever known". He went on to predict that it would not last. He heard little grumbles already, and...

...as time goes by these mild and good-tempered gripes could turn into genuine dissatisfaction. After all, the two other Labour governments with big majorities ended in tears. The much overrated Clement Attlee so miscalculated his 1945 majority of 144 that it was eliminated by 1951. Harold Wilson's 1966 majority of 97 was wiped out in 1970. Both times, dissatisfaction among Labour MPs played a significant part in the defeat.

And trouble they will make. So will the Liberal Democrats. There is a fundamental design fault in Mr Blair's much-touted philosophy of "detribalising" Westminster politics,

which commentators have taken to mean bidding for Liberal Democrat support against his own left wing. On most of the issues where he might actually need support against his own left wing, the Liberal Democrats are going to be with his left wing. Many of Mr Blair's biggest and most bitter battles are likely to be about welfare and spending.

If he wants a detribalisation strategy of any use to him in the division lobbies (and indeed, in the press), then it is with the Conservatives that he needs to build bridges — as a rather dismayed *Guardian* leading article pointed out last week, noting the coalition that had won Harriet Harman her victory over single mothers. It is, oh dear, Mr Kaufman again who has pointed out that the most troublesome press criticism that Labour now faces comes from *The Guardian*. Tony Blair's press commentary is giving him a much fairer wind. This is "detribalisation", captain, but not as we know it.

I have suggested parallels between the crunch Margaret Thatcher faced in the first two years of her premiership and the crunch Tony Blair must now contemplate in his mastery of his party. I have said that her assignment was a tough one, and that she was brave.

Mr Blair's assignment is tougher, and he will need to be braver. That is because Margaret Thatcher's challenge was to be true to her party's core principles. Mr Blair's challenge is to betray his party's core principles.

Even during her worst political storms, Margaret Thatcher could put a sheet anchor down into the current of a century of Conservative thinking and belief, and be steady by it. She was going with the grain. Tony Blair has no such luxury. He is all against the grain of his party's history and he knows it. His lifelines are to his new fair-weather friends in middle England and not to the old friends of his movement: the poor, the dispossessed, the working class, the academic left, Hampstead, the LSE and the trade unions. These he must betray, exchanging their love and constancy for the more fickle affections of the Sierra-owning classes.

Will his party let him do it? Is he determined to try? Or were the Tory boneheads, who a year ago were baying that the Left would resurface after the election, right after all? In which case (as Lord Melbourne remarked), "What all the wise men said would happen has not happened, and what all the damned fools said would happen has come to pass."

Philip Howard



■ Humbug, and this time my opinion won't change

The bell struck midnight. Scrooge groaned at this 154th annual resurrection of his Christmas card, and reached for the Teasmade on his bedside table. But this uncharacteristic luxury contained only hot water, without the usual comforting smell of scalded teabags. And this year for a change there were two Ghosts of Christmas Yet to Come gliding towards the foot of his futon. They were trying, not entirely successfully, to wipe out their normally insincere smiles, and they were followed by a cameraman on a dolly and several production assistants with clipboards and headphones.

"Who — who are you?" quavered Scrooge, who, if truth be told, was getting fed up with his annual production as a Christmas morality tale. "And where is my tea? I simply cannot go through this annual pantomime as 'Mr Meanie' without my braces of Tetley's."

"We are the Rupert and Julie Show," groaned the two anchorpersons, in something close to unison, while the PAs whispered into their microphones and the sound engineers fended with their booms and looked bored. "And have you not heard the midnight newshash? A compound nucleus of EU scientists has suggested that the tannin in tea may give you TSE, or 'Tea Scaly End'. The chances of doing so are only 1.3 billion to one. You are 100,000 times more likely to be killed in a traffic accident, and 10,000 times more likely to die after being hit by a block of frozen excrement dropped from an airliner. But the minister has decided that he must follow the advice of his scientists and abide by Brussels sprouts. So tea on the leaf is banned from midnight, and you must have it up this year without your early-morning stiffener."

"But why do you look so sombre and serious, dread anchormen?" cried Scrooge. "Of course I do not possess a set myself. But I have watched your show through the window of the television rental shop. And it seemed to me that its format was for you to look sunny however irritating or imbecile your allegedly celebrity guests and representative spokespersons."

"Oh secret and self-contained man, as solitary as an oyster," intoned Rupert and Julie together, "Can you not tell from our solemn faces and the funeral background music that the nation has suffered another shocking celebrity tragedy? So we are going to cover it in our standard Celebrity Sadness Format or CSF. This means that we shall look solemn and repeat the sad news throughout the night, updating as we go and interspersing it briefly with the only three items of real news that we have. So over to you, Julian."

Nevertheless: "The Seoul stock market has crashed and the South Korean economy has gone down the plughole. An earthquake has destroyed both Forth bridges and most of Edinburgh. And revolutionaries in the rebellious Russian province of Orenburgazstan, angry at the shortage of vowels, have launched nuclear missiles at Nato headquarters in Brussels and London. And now, back to you, Rupert and Julie."

"Thank you, Terry. And now to see how saddened the ordinary British public is by this sad news, over to our man in the street with a camera crew. How sad is the ordinary British public about this shocking celebrity tragedy, Joseph?"

"Thank you, Rupert. Thank you, Julie. As you can see, members of the public have spontaneously gathered in the street in front of our cameras to express their grief at this shocking celebrity tragedy. And here are a husband and wife who have come a long way to be present in person at this solemn event. How far have you come?"

"Husband and wife together: "We have driven 750 miles. As soon as we saw the tragic celebrity logo on TV and heard the tragic celeb music, we got into our car and drove through the night. We live in Harlow. So most of that mileage was taken by getting lost on the elevated sections of the M1 and trying to find somewhere to park."

Reporter: "And how do you feel? Gunned and devastated?"

Husband and wife together: "Definitely."

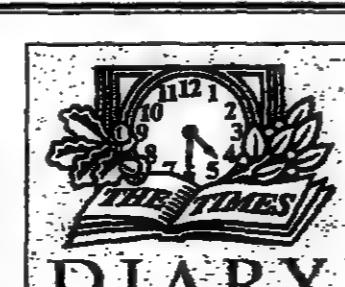
Members of the crowd behind them wave at the camera. Reporter: "And now back to Rupert and Julie." Scrooge: "This must be another bad dream. Please let this festive celebrity go back to sleep for another year."

Bishop's tale

THE voice of reason is to be heard from beyond the grave. Shortly before his death, Lord Wyatt of Weeford wrote a play containing a stinging attack on liberal clergy. Now friends of the late polemicist, politician and bon viveur are keen to transport the work to the stage. *The Bishop's Wife* attacks hypocrisy, homosexuality and Radio 4's *Thought for the Day*, which is portrayed as a vehicle for pompous cant. Wyatt, an atheist, hoped to have the play performed next year. It is a fruity tale about a sanctimonious bishop who pontificates on *Thought for the Day* rather more often than he sings *alleluia* in his parish church. To relieve the tedium of marriage to a retired actress, he spends nights sloping off to his mistress, rising to preach family values over the airwaves. Friends are determined to see the play staged. "It would be a wonderful memorial party to Woodrow," says Norman Lamont.

"He often talked about the script and obviously loved writing it. He adored the theatre — he was a friend of Noel Coward." His anticlericalism developed late. "We went to a church in Tuscany and he seemed terribly moved. He loved the Gregorian chanting."

BEFORE a jolly lunch at Christopher's yesterday, I bumped into our Health Secretary wheezing up the stairs. "I am well apart from a



Friends: Lamont and Wyatt

• ANN Widdecombe has a new starring role. The Tory grande dame is to play a judge in a Channel 4 series discussing such issues as abortion and drugs in front of a jury. Judge Dredd: watch out.

Final Straw

AS IF blessing Formula One with nine more seasons of tobacco-fuelled racing had not sufficed the Government's name at the British Thoracic Society, Tessa Jowell has

let them down again. On Tuesday the health minister was to address them on "How the Government can stop young people smoking". She never turned up. "We were all expecting her — some were rather excited," says a smokeless sort. "No reason was given." A sidekick is vaguely apologetic: "She cancelled due to diary pressures."

• THAT orange fancier Lord Irwin of Lairg, refreshingly free of modesty, has been telling friends about the Scotland Bill. "I wrote it. All of it." He expanded over a glass. This could be news to his old friend Donald Dewar, the Scottish Secretary, whose wife Alison left him for Irwin more than 20 years ago. Dewar's office is pizzled. "Oh dear," muttered a source there. "It was a major team effort."

Brushing up

WHILE her husband Alan grapples with the nature of authenticity in court, the real Jane Clark has stood up. She is returning to the painting career she abandoned to bring up her family and has composed a series of pictures of the First World War. One, *Letter from Home*, is displayed in an exhibition by MPs. The mournful piece depicts poppies, blood and a white feather. Her husband, author of *The Donkeys*, is urging her to paint more. "She is a beautiful artist," he says, "rather surreal." She is taking his advice. "He would have loved his father to have seen them. I'd like to sell some to pay for my addiction to gardening and art shops." Her impressive work puts MPs to shame. Only four submitted daubings. "I allowed Mrs Clark to display because my colleagues are too bone idle," says Michael Colvin, MP, the

organiser. "She's the first spouse to be exhibited in the Commons." I hope it leads to a successful career.

• AT a City party, PR giants Brian Basham and David Burnside met with an attempted embrace that went wrong. As Basham averted his head, Burnside's nose collided with Basham's ear. Blood spurted from Burnside's nose. "I'd rather physical injury than a Belfast kiss," says Basham.

JASPER GERARD



Jane Clark's painting *Letter from Home*, and the artist herself



A TONGUE FOR EUROPE

Labour manners imperil the Blair message

Since May the new Labour Government has been a source of fascination, envy and hope for much of Europe. Continental voters have been as dazzled as the British by Labour's pace, style and promises. Tony Blair has high hopes of using Britain's European Union presidency to promote British values of openness and deregulation. The machine-minders of Downing Street have, therefore, been puzzled and irked by recent criticism in the European press that Mr Blair is "arrogant", that his claims to leadership in the European Union are overweening.

They ought not to be puzzled. The problem lies in themselves. What is abundantly clear to a growing number outside Downing Street is that the message is being sabotaged by the arrogance, ignorance and bad manners of the messengers. Britain, like America, has never treated foreign correspondents with much respect, believing that they deliver no news and therefore have little claim on officials' time and attention. Under Labour, however, this attitude has been exacerbated by the manic insistence of attempting to keep all briefings whereas ever they are aimed, "our message".

French, German and Italian newspapers cannot be so manipulated. They do not see policy through the eyes of British domestic interests, do not share the same assumptions and political short-hand and cannot therefore be "spun" to deliver government policy in the way its spokesmen would demand.

A correspondent for Austria's most respected newspaper has gone so far as to tell colleagues that Alastair Campbell, the Prime Minister's spokesman, behaves as though he was a member of a master race. He insists on "Victory for Tony Blair or shut up", she wrote. There may be some hyperbole here, even in respect of so confident a figure as Mr Campbell. But the attack should cause Mr Blair concern.

The Austrian sentiment finds echoes

across the Continent. Journalists from France, Germany, Italy and Spain — all countries whose attitudes and votes Britain needs to court if it is to aspire to a successful presidency of the European Union — recall instances where they have been brushed aside, dismissed and collectively mocked. Charlie Whelan, Gordon Brown's press spokesman, is alleged to have described a group as "that lot" who purvey "Euro-crap" and "Euro-bollocks".

Continental newspapers are, indeed, somewhat uncritical of their political masters' great European project. The British tradition is more combative. Sir Bernard Ingham, Margaret Thatcher's ears and voice for more than a decade, set a certain standard of bluntness; but he was never accused of ill manners on the current scale.

Explanations are no excuses. If a British briefer turns on a Swede and tells her to repeat her question when she can speak English, he alienates at a stroke all her readers from one of Britain's most steadfast supporters. When a Foreign Office diplomat, practised in French, turns his back on a journalist from Paris with the comment "I don't answer questions in French", he reinforces every cliché that Robin Cook is trying to dispel.

Image-making differs from country to country. While humour does not translate easily, rudeness is universally recognised. In two weeks' time, Britain will assume responsibility for briefing journalists from 15 different countries after every minister's meeting, every informal conclave and every international summit. If its official spokesmen continue to treat the media of Britain's partners with contempt, disparagement and linguistic ignorance, the Government will find that within weeks its stewardship will be derided, its achievements belittled and its goals mocked. Careless talk costs political lives.

MANDELA TO MBEKI

The ANC and white South Africans must adapt to each other

South Africa has this week witnessed an extraordinarily smooth transition. Nelson Mandela handed over the leadership of the African National Congress to Thabo Mbeki, a process that will almost certainly be repeated for the State Presidency after national elections in 16 months. Winnie Madikizela-Mandela's extravagant push for the post of deputy president disappeared. Even if her name had been put forward she would not have received that support required for nomination. Whether she is a spent force will be better measured through the contest for the National Executive Committee today.

This calm transfer of authority has been a real achievement for Mr Mandela. In a continent where rulers routinely continue until removed by coup or death, his decision to step down will set a potent precedent. Many white South Africans will feel, however, that the security of certainty offered by these events has been curtailed by Mr Mandela's address to the ANC activists. A man who has come to embody racial reconciliation chose to launch a set of attacks on the former ruling race. The tone of his contempt for opponents of the ANC did little to promote confidence in the prospects for pluralist democracy. As Tony Leon, leader of the free-market Democratic Party, rightly argued, the speech was the "low-water mark of his presidency". Mr Mandela's willingness to embrace his former wife will have struck many as equally inappropriate.

Mr Mandela's words, it is claimed, were inspired by Mr Mbeki. If true, an exceptionally cunning strategy has been executed. Mr Mbeki's own remarks upon his elevation to the ANC presidency were much more measured. He also suggested that many

whites were oblivious to the conditions of the majority around them. But he conceded that the Government had not argued effectively that a non-racial society was in the interests of all races. Over the past three years Mr Mbeki has been a proponent of financial orthodoxy and a friend of business interests. It may be that he chose Mr Mandela to deliver a message to that constituency.

In more temperate language, there is a substantial case that white South Africans would be wise to consider. There are aspects of apartheid that oblige atonement. Too many corporate executives have complained to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission about the damage to their pockets and profits from white rule not surprisingly they have infuriated moderates such as Mr Mbeki. South Africa's continued stability demands continued action on education and infrastructure to assist impoverished millions. This will, realistically, require a small sacrifice of sorts from the entrenched elite.

The challenge for Mr Mbeki is to promote that process without counter-productive initiatives. South Africa must preserve its First World economy while addressing its Third World issues. Reconciliation and reconstruction should operate in tandem. His most effective weapon in this quest would be more, not less, capitalism. The apartheid era spawned a corporatist economy with cartels in every sector. The limited liberalisation and privatisation that the ANC has encouraged so far has been more effective in attacking the control exercised by a small network of white families than a dozen speeches from Mrs Madikizela-Mandela. This may not be a popular formula this week but it should be the one that Mr Mbeki adheres to in office.

Yours faithfully,
SELWYN HODSON PRESSINGER,
4 Lyall Street, SW1X 8DW.

PRISONERS OF POLITICS

Justice has become a casualty of the peace process

Equality under the law is the cornerstone of civilization, arbitrary justice its dry rot. Men properly convicted of murder should serve the sentence that justice demands, not that which expediency may require.

Although justice may be appropriately tempered by mercy, in Northern Ireland it is being administered through the looking-glass. Men who plotted murder, with malice aforethought and heedless of the inevitable misery, will spend this Christmas with their families and in the knowledge that other colleagues are being released altogether. At the same time two young men who made a terrible mistake under great pressure while risking their own lives for others remain in jail. The IRA's bombers who die at home this Christmas, and the Scots Guardsmen who languish in jail are the undeserving beneficiaries and the unfortunate victims of the subversion of justice designed to propitiate the violent.

There is a high political defence for the indulgent treatment of Paul Kavanagh and Thomas Quigley, whose month-long bombing campaign claimed three lives and blighted many more. That defence can be used to justify the Christmas release of Patrick Magee, the Brighton bomber sentenced by a judge who branded him "a man of exceptional cruelty and inhumanity".

These men, and many other prisoners,

ceasefire. If they enjoy tangible benefits from the ceasefire, it is argued, they will lend their weight to the argument for its maintenance. But what sort of ceasefire is it that relies on the pampering of calculating killers to keep it in place?

The Christmas release of IRA terrorists is not the only evidence of a political intervention in what should be the autonomous realm of the courts. The continued incarceration of Jim Fisher and Mark Wright, two Scots Guardsmen who killed a suspected terrorist in 1992, can only be understood as an act of appeasement. They made a terrible mistake in shooting an innocent boy, but they acted under pressure in circumstances which their training led them to believe was an ambush. They have served more than five years for an offence similar to that of Lee Clegg, another soldier who killed in error and served three and a half years.

The only justification for their remaining in jail is a fear of inflaming republican feeling. The support for their release expressed by the Taoiseach MP, Martin Bell, who knows first hand about life under fire, should encourage the fair-minded to respond sympathetically to their plight. These young men were serving their country, made a mistake and paid the price. Keeping them in prison for fear of the republican mob is also a mistake. The price will always be a peace that depends on the goodwill of men motivated by malice.

Yours faithfully,
KEITH KYLE
Visiting Professor of History,
University of Ulster,
25 Oppidum Road, NW3 3AG.

Blair's X factor on single currency

From Mr Ian Taylor, MP for Esher and Walton (Conservative)

Sir, The euro is likely to be the single currency covering 80 per cent of the European single market. No wonder that the Prime Minister, in his article, "Neither a surrender, nor isolation" (December 13), stresses his determination to ensure that the powers of the Euro X committee are only to be informed. Even if he succeeds, the odds are that the committee will have a powerful influence. Your own leader, "Blair's X factor" (December 13), was wrong to say he should have dismissed the issue with a Gallic shrug.

So far, most commentators on EMU highlight the threats to the UK from membership. The events of the last few days underline that there are also political and economic costs in not joining. Staying out will be painful. The Prime Minister had better make up his mind rapidly where he stands. If he does not want to be marginalised, or to lose influence over matters affecting vital national interests, he must have the courage to provide a clearer timetable for the readiness of the UK to join EMU. This will entail setting out more precisely the policies to achieve the necessary convergence.

Yours faithfully,
IAN TAYLOR,
House of Commons.
December 15.

From Mr Selwyn Hodson Pressinger.

Sir, It is doubtful Mr Blair's article will impress the "in" members of the Euro X club. Nonetheless he still deserves our support.

Many like myself who have worked in continental Europe in recent years appreciate the merits of a "common" currency. It was something the mark was already fast resembling, being Europe's common currency by reference. For this reason, many of us were initially enthusiastic about a "single" currency, which seemed a logical progression from the common currency.

However, the full implications of EMU and the difficulties arising from the EU's agreed timetable for the imposition of a single currency have given genuine cause for concern. As most British economists agree, this is not the time for us to join. Naturally the Euro X "in" members are unsympathetic to our position. After all, theirs are the economies most at risk. If exclusion from their meetings is a price Britain has to pay, so be it.

Yours faithfully,
SELWYN HODSON PRESSINGER,
4 Lyall Street, SW1X 8DW.

Tory leadership

From Sir Julian Critchley

Sir, The campaign launched by some Tory MPs in favour of one man, one vote (Omv) for the leadership of the Tory party (report and leading article, December 17) is a giant step in the right direction.

Any observer who has attended a Conservative Party conference in whatever capacity can only have been alarmed by the prejudices shown by the bulk of the party activists who attend such jamborees. With a few exceptions, the "loudest" consist of right-wing Tories of the most unatractive kind: racists, floggers and hangers-on, and passionate "Eurosceptics".

I have been attending party conferences for thirty years. In each case the "battle" waged was between a relatively moderate platform and an extremist rank-and-file. Ask Lord Whiteclaw, who, as Home Secretary, was obliged to defend good sense against a noisy and foolish opposition. Throw them a bone by all means, but make it a small one.

Yours etc,
JULIAN CRITCHLEY,
19 Broad Street,
Ludlow SY8 1NG.
December 17.

Oaths of allegiance

From Professor Keith Kyle

Sir, I was not able in the course of a short letter (December 4) to go into the detail of the many stages of the Bradlaugh case, to which I made allusion when addressing the position of the MPs from Belfast West and Mid-Ulster. As my friend Sir Ludovic Kennedy quite correctly points out (letter, December 13; see also letter, December 6), during the course of the controversy in 1880 and subsequently, Bradlaugh did several times express willingness to take the oath and in fact administered it to himself.

But the points that are relevant here are that the cause of the row was his wish in the first place to affirm, rather than to take a (to him) meaningless oath, and the refusal of the House up to 1886 to allow him to take the oath on account of his having made his original stand.

Historical analogies are never exact. But this one raised, though it did not solve, the same issue that is raised in the cases of Messrs Adams and McGuinness: is a constituency entitled to be represented by the person it chooses or not? I think it is now generally acknowledged that the House did not enhance its reputation by its 19th-century response.

Yours faithfully,
KEITH KYLE
Visiting Professor of History,
University of Ulster,
25 Oppidum Road, NW3 3AG.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

1 Pennington Street, London E1 9XN Telephone 0171-782 5000

Why charities merit their tax breaks

From the Chief Executive of the Charities Aid Foundation

Sir, Matthew Parry's logic ("Uncharitable thoughts", December 12) seems to me to be back to front. In essence he writes that the taxes we all pay have to be increased to pay for charity tax exemptions. And worse, some charities have become very successful, which makes the tax burden on you and me even greater and more onerous.

Looking through the telescope from the right end we see this picture: people getting together to do good in the interest of society as a whole (not for themselves) may create legal entanglements. As these entities do not make profits or benefit, say, shareholders, the tax issue doesn't arise, indeed it should. Surely this is highly desirable!

Incidentally, the aggregate of charitable activity has just reached 4 per cent of GDP and is not forecast to rise, which puts his article into perspective. This level of activity would plummet if we were to decide, as he suggests, to tax people trying to do good in this organised way.

He suggests the Wellcome Trust is a "bulk" and a tax drain. It is also a huge benefit to the nation. Would we really prefer not to have philanthropists?

Yours faithfully,
MICHAEL EDE
Executive Director,
Association for Contingent Advice;
Chief Executive, The Terrence Higgins Trust, 1989-90;

Winchester House, Kensington Park,
Cranmer Road, The Oval, SW9 6EJ.
December 12.

From the Director of Charity Check

Sir, Peter Brown's statement ("Watch out, crooks ahead", December 1) that "Surprisingly, the law does not prevent any competent crook from registering or acquiring registered charities" brought an uncomfortable truth into the open.

The Charities Aid Foundation has said: "The current system of registration is the lowest common denominator. It doesn't guarantee a level of worthiness or standards of behaviour" (Reader's Digest, November 1995).

If some simple precautions were more widely taken to check that only genuine charities were allowed to make cash collections, hundreds of millions of pounds could be saved from going astray. Dubious off-street collections can be quickly banished if all those with discretion to allow collections make a point of first checking on the charity. Charity Check keeps a well used database.

We hope the Government will take an immediate decision to put things right. Official encouragement to take up genuine references could prevent most of the problem quickly, even before any legislation.

Yours faithfully,
PHILIP COWEN,
Director, Charity Check,
18 North End Road, NW1 7PH.
December 12.

From the Director of Voluntary Service Overseas

Sir, Like many readers, I expect, I was moved by the plight of the South African burn victim, Dorah Meekana (article, "Who will save this child?", December 16). At any time of year, heartfelt pleas for help should be heeded, but is the long-term solution simply a financial one?

Dorah's situation is shared by many children around the world. Training people to become doctors and nurses takes a long time and is expensive. Many newly qualified doctors in developing countries seek work in private hospitals or in the West. The result is a drastic shortage of skills and experience where they are needed most — in family clinics and rural hospitals.

That is why VSO supplies skilled and qualified professionals — sur-

geons, doctors, nurses, midwives — to share their knowledge and experience with local people. This way local people learn the skills they need to care for all kinds of illnesses. VSO receives hundreds of requests for health professionals a year and relies on suitably qualified people in the UK volunteering to help children like Dorah in South Africa and 88 other countries around the world.

I hope this Christmas that people moved by Dorah's story will respond by donating money — but also by thinking about volunteering their much-needed skills overseas. It is only by considering the longer-term, sustainable solution for countries like South Africa that Dorah's plight won't be repeated time and time again.

Yours sincerely,
DAVID GREEN,
Director, VSO,
317 Putney Bridge Road, SW15 2PN.
December 16.

reported with benzodiazepines; and he is certainly wrong to suggest that they are "invariably shortened". For many users, that would prove true only if they were restarted on antidepressants. This would abort withdrawal effects, but only at the risk of compounding dependence problems in the longer term.

The Medicines Control Agency initially responded to my paper with knee-jerk denials but has now undertaken to review the evidence I set out in the *International Journal of Risk & Safety in Medicine*. Professor Beaumont would be well advised to do the same.

Yours faithfully,
CHARLES MEDAWAR
(Director,
Social Audit Ltd.,
PO Box 111, London NW1 8XG).

Antidepressant drugs

From Mr Charles Medawar

Sir, Professor George Beaumont (letter, December 12) takes me to task for suggesting that there is a real risk of dependence with antidepressant drugs, comparable to that with benzodiazepine tranquillisers such as diazepam (Valium) or lorazepam (Ativan). His views might have carried more weight with me if his links with the pharmaceutical industry were not so close — and had he not mounted an equally vigorous defence of the anti-arthritis drug, ibuprofen (Opan), shortly before it was withdrawn in 1982.

Professor Beaumont acknowledges withdrawal problems with antidepressants, but fails to explain why there have been so many more than

Historically analogous are never exact. But this one raised, though it did not solve, the same issue that is raised in the cases of Messrs Adams and McGuinness: is a constituency entitled to be represented by the person it chooses or not? I think it is now generally acknowledged that the House did not enhance its reputation by its 19th-century response.

Today you published a photograph of children playing in this "big snowball" and my feelings were rewarded by the scene: snowballs playing in about 1m of the white stuff, while in the background cars drive along what appears to be a totally clear road.

The teachers had a nice day off, I hope.

Yours faithfully,
PETER BURNIE,
8 Distract Crescent,
High Wycombe HP13 5EJ.
peter_burnie@pbmicro.demon.co.uk
December 18.

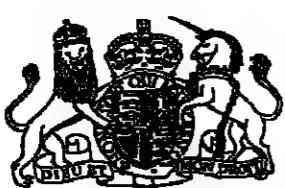
Letters for publication may be faxed to 0171-782 5046, e-mail to: letters@the-times.co.uk

Shylock as drawn by Shakespeare

From Mr Martin D. Yaffe

Sir, Heather Neill ("Shylock's pound-flesh", Arts, December 9) rightly notes that Shakespeare's alleged portrayal of Shylock as a representative Jew clashes with our judgment of his humanity and sophistication as "beyond any expectations we may have of his contemporaries".

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COURT CIRCULAR

BUCKINGHAM PALACE December 18: The Baroness Gould of Potternewton was received by The Queen upon relinquishing her appointment as a Baroness in Waiting to Her Majesty and the Baroness Ramsay of Carvalle was received by The Queen upon her appointment as a Baroness in Waiting to Her Majesty.

Her Excellency Mrs Roza Otunbayeva was received in audience by The Queen and presented her Letters of Credence as Ambassador from the Republic of Kyrgyzstan to the Court of St James's.

Mr J.R. Young (Deputy Under-Secretary and Chief Clerk, Foreign and Commonwealth Office) was present.

Sir Robin Butler was received by Her Majesty upon relinquishing his appointment as Secretary to the Cabinet.

Major General Angus Ramsay was received by The Queen upon his appointment as Commander British Forces Cyprus and Administrator of the Sovereign Base Area.

Major Albert Smith was received by Her Majesty and took leave upon his retirement from service in the Royal Household as Superintendent of the Royal Mews.

BUCKINGHAM PALACE December 19: The Duke of York this evening attended the Year of the Seafarer Finale Concert in aid of King

George's Fund for Sailors at the Queen Elizabeth Hall, London SE1.

CLARE HOUSE

December 19: Major General Sir Simon Cooper today had the honour of being received by Queen Elizabeth The Queen Mother, Honorary Colonel, The Royal Yeomanry, upon relinquishing his appointment as Colonel of The Royal Yeomanry.

General Sir Jeremy Blacker also had the honour of being received by Her Majesty upon assuming his appointment as Colonel of The Royal Yeomanry.

ST JAMES'S PALACE

December 19: The Prince of Wales, Patron, this evening held a Reception for members of the Glamorgan County Cricket Club.

KENSINGTON PALACE

December 19: The Princess Margaret, Countess of Snowdon was present this evening at a performance of *Cinderella* by the Adventures in Motion Pictures Company, in aid of the Dancers' Trust, at the Piccadilly Theatre, London WI.

The Queen has been pleased to make the following appointment to Her Majesty's Household:

The Earl of Airlie KT to be a Permanent Lord in Waiting.



David King, 6, centre, and his brother Thomas, 4, from Crystal Palace, playing with the figures in a Christmas crib created by the North London sculptor Alec Worster for Southwark Cathedral, South London. In 1995 he completed a series of figures of homeless people which was shown in the cathedral last December; these led to him being commissioned to create the crib

Today's royal engagements

The Queen will visit The Queen's Royal Lancers at Belvoir Castle, Grantham, Lincolnshire at 11.35 to mark her 50th year as Colonel-in-Chief of the Regiment.

The Prince of Wales, Patron, British Cancer Help Centre, will visit the centre at Grove House, Cornwallis Grove, Clifton, at noon.

Birthdays today

Sir Antony Buck, QC, former MP, 69; Sir Ross Buckland, chief executive, Unigate, 55; Mr Upamanyu Chatterjee, novelist, 38; Mr Timmy Eggar, former MP, 46; Brigadier L.J. Harris, cartographer, 87; Sir Brian Hill, former president Higgs and Hill, 65; Mr Steven Isserlis, cellist, 39; Mr Syd Little, comedian, 55.

Mr Tim Parks, novelist, 43; the Marquess of Queensberry, 88; Mr David Rose-Beddoe, chairman, Welsh Development Agency, 60; Sir David Rose-Ham, former Lord Mayor of London, 62; Professor Christopher Tizard, Rector, University of Bristol, 75; Sir Donald Mountfield, Sir Peter Peter, Sir Daniel Wilson, Sir John Williams, Sir Michael Wilcock, QC, Sir Nicholas Scott, Mr Dominic Shorthouse, Sir Crispin Tickell, Peter Thompson and Baron Vass, 70.

Luncheons

Mr Frank Law
Mr Frank Law gave a luncheon at Bootle yesterday. The guests were:

Lord Alan Sir Angus Ogilvy, Lord Balfe of Dorking, CH; Mr Robin Gordon, Lord Chalfont; Sir Norman Foster, RA, and his wife; Sir Michael Gordon, Mr David Gordon Shand, Sir Alain Grizar, Mr Peter Hart, Mr George Hart, Mr John Hodge, Mr Tony Gulliford, Mr Martin Lane, Mr Christopher Law, Mr Peter Law, Mr Christopher Lee, Mr Peter Lee, Mr Peter Lunn, Mr Peter Maitland, Mr Peter Mountjoy of Beaumaris, Mr Robin Mounfield, Sir Peter Peter, Sir Daniel Wilson, Sir John Williams, Sir Michael Wilcock, QC, Sir Nicholas Scott, Mr Dominic Shorthouse, Sir Crispin Tickell, Peter Thompson and Baron Vass.

National Sporting Club

Mr Angus Fraser was the guest of honour at a luncheon of the National Sporting Club held yesterday at the Café Royal. Mr David Willis, club director, presided and Mr Keith O'Keefe was the guest speaker.

Glass Sellers

The following have been installed officers of the Glass Sellers' Company for the ensuing year:

Master, Mr John Hitch; Prime Warden, Mr Christopher Tizard; Renter Warden, the Right Rev John Waine, KCVO.

Anniversaries

BIRTHS William Edward Perry, Arctic explorer, Bath, 1790; Sir Ralph Richardson, actor, Cheltenham, 1902; Leonid Brezhnev, President of the Soviet Union 1977-82; Dneproborzhinsk, Ukraine, 1906; Dr B.H.T. Rippey and Professor C. Gibson from The Queen's University of Belfast, £24,727 from NERC (Asses the importance of rapid sedimentation for the removal of trace metal contaminants in lakes)

DEATHS Matteo Boiardo, poet, Reggio nell'Emilia, 1494; Vitus Bering, navigator, Bering Island, 1741; David Hartley the younger, statesman and inventor, Bath, 1822.

DEATHS Manzo Bolardo, poet, Reggio nell'Emilia, 1494; Vitus Bering, navigator, Bering Island, 1741; David Hartley the younger, statesman and inventor, Bath, 1822.

1813: Benjamin Smith Barton, naturalist, Philadelphia, 1815; Emily Bronte, poet and novelist, Haworth, Yorkshire, 1848; Joseph Mallord William Turner, painter, London, 1851; Sir Paul Vincidorff, historian, Paris, 1925; Louis Untermeyer, writer, 1977.

Henry II became King of England, 1154.

Britain and China signed an agreement for the return in 1997 of Hong Kong to China, 1984.

Dr A P McHale, Professor R

University news

University of Ulster

Research Grants

Professor M Carey, £151,458 from the Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council (A more flexible framework for modelling time-varying traffic on road networks).

Dr J McCloskey, £25,499 from the Natural Environment Research Council (High resolution search for repeating earthquakes on the Elba Fault, Gulf of Corinth)

Dr B H.R.T. Rippey and Professor C. Gibson from The Queen's University of Belfast, £24,727 from NERC (Asses the importance of rapid sedimentation for the removal of trace metal contaminants in lakes)

National Sporting Club

Professor B Norton, Mr D J Lawry, Dr S N G Lo, Mr P G Donnelly, £300,720 from CEC - THERMIE (Learning Resource Centre, Jordanswood).

Dr J A McLaughlin, Dr P D Maguire, Professor J McD Anderson, £266,584 from IKTU - START programme (Plasma enhanced CVD of nanostructured materials for studying diet and gut maturation in early life)

Professor D Carson and Mr A O'Driscoll (DUBLIN Institute of Technology), £34,522 from CEC - TMR (Understanding changing approaches to organising and managing marketing activities in the larger SME)

Professor B Norton, £29,970 from Northern Ireland Housing Executive (Optimal deployment of innovative energy efficient building envelope technologies to existing and new dwelling stocks in Northern Ireland)

Dr D Bloomfield and Professor J A Dunn, £28,471 from United States Institute for Peace (Official mediation in Northern Ireland; case studies and strategies for intervention)

Dr M A Wilson and Dr D Morrow, £97,500 from ERDF, £32,500 from CCRU (Experiences of equity, diversity and interdependence translating community relations theory into practice)

Professor K O'Neill, £62,010 from DTI & Fresh Food Kitchen (Teaching Company Programme between the University of Ulster and Singularty Ltd)

Dr G McMullan and Dr W F Smyth, £127,960 from CEC - ERDF INTERREG (Development of analytical methods for monitoring of trace concentrations of organic pollutants in the environment)

Dr M J Charlies and Dr D Morrow, £12,500 from CEC - ERDF INTERREG (Environmental impact of the relocation of outfalls)

Dr A P McHale, Professor R

Merchant, Dr U P Singh, Dr G McMullan, £68,970 from Industrial Research and Technology Unit - START programme (Bioremediation of contaminated effluent)

Dr A Cooper and Mr G Nevin, £59,430 from Dr Port (UK) Ltd (Investigation into lime pool rehabilitation and lagoon habitat remediation at Maydown)

Professor C G Knox, Dr M R Murray, Dr J E Hughes, £31,757 from the Northern Ireland Partnership Board (Qualitative evaluation of district partnerships)

Professor I Rowland, £45,282 from CEC - FAIR (New methodologies for studying diet and gut maturation in early life)

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Dr D Bloomfield and Professor J A

NEWS

SAS help to arrest Croat suspects

■ SAS troops joined Dutch marines in pre-dawn raids in central Bosnia, arresting two Croats suspected of war crimes, one of whom was injured in a shoot-out in his bedroom.

The operation belied Nato claims that suspected war criminals are arrested only during normal duties for the Bosnian Stabilisation Force. Nato sources in Sarajevo said the move could be the prelude to an operation to seize "big fish" suspects, such as Radovan Karadzic and Ratko Mladic. Page 1

Princess and Dodi's 'last interview'

■ A French magazine published what it claimed was the last interview with Diana, Princess of Wales, and Dodi Fayed, in which they speak intimately about their relationship and the possibility of marriage and children. They were said to have spoken just weeks before their fatal car crash. Page 1

Heroine dies in fire

One of New York's richest women, Catalina Meyer, 60, died in her burning five-storey mansion while trying to save a trapped friend. Page 1

Code of practice

A new code of practice, designed to give people greater protection from intrusion by newspapers and magazines, was dubbed the "toughest in Europe" by Lord Wakeham. Page 4

Violence 'distorted'

Death has become so commonplace in British television soap operas that it is distorting the nation's concept of violence, according to research. Page 5

Mi6 man jailed

Richard Tomlinson, a former Mi6 officer, was jailed for 12 months for seeking to sell his story to an Australian publisher, but government lawyers fear he will try again. Page 6

Hindley fights on

Myra Hindley vowed to fight on for her freedom after failing to overturn the Home Secretary's decision that she must die in jail. Page 7

Historic day for Scots

The legislation that will create the first Scottish Parliament for almost 300 years was published by Donald Dewar, Scottish Secretary, who hailed it as an historic and radical document. Page 8

Daimler suffers new safety setback

■ The German car manufacturer Daimler-Benz is delaying the launch of its Smart model because of safety problems — months after its Mercedes A-Class turned over in trials. The two-seater Smart car, developed and built in partnership with SMH, the Swiss watch manufacturers, flipped over during the same "elk tests" for emergency road holding. Page 1

After Dolly, Polly

Scottish scientists responsible for Dolly the cloned sheep have now produced Polly — a lamb that makes a human blood-clotting protein. Page 9

Philby 'suicide bid'

Kim Philby, the double agent who betrayed Britain during the Cold War, tried to take his own life soon after defecting to Moscow in the 1960s, according to a book by his widow. Page 13

Children captive

At least three Dallas children were still held captive by a gunman who the day before had kidnapped more than 60. Page 14

Clinton Invitations

President Clinton will kick-start the Middle East peace process by inviting Israeli and Palestinian leaders to meet him in Washington next month. Page 15

European risk

Tony Blair has promised to bring Europe closer to the people when Britain takes the EU presidency next month, but the government message of "greater transparency" risks backfiring thanks to its media managers. Page 16

Sithole to appeal

The Rev Ndabandire Sithole, 77, was sentenced to two years in jail for conspiring to blow up President Mugabe of Zimbabwe, then given bail to appeal against his conviction. Page 17

Elk

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A clergyman cleans a nativity scene fresco at the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem before Midnight Mass on Christmas Eve

BUSINESS

Supermarkets: The prospect of an Asda bid for Safeway receded after Archie Norman, Asda's chairman, poured cold water on speculation. Page 25

Fine: The London Stock Exchange has fined JP Morgan, the US investment bank, £350,000 for breaking the rules — the first such fine since 1995. Page 25

Boeing: The manufacturer of most of the world's civil aircraft was warned by the Federal Aviation Authority, the US safety regulator, that its production lines were "out of control". Page 25

Markets: The FTSE 100 fell 2.5 points to close at 5168.3. Sterling's trade-weighted index rose to 104.1 after a rise to \$1.6607 and to DM2.9434. Page 28

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SPORTS

Cricket: England are favourites to beat West Indies in the Champions Trophy final in Sharjah, but must beware in case Brian Lara erupts with the bat. Page 42

Football: England will play World Cup warm-up matches against Chile and Saudi Arabia, both of whom are playing in the tournament. Opponents for other planned games have yet to be decided. Page 43

Boxing: Few, if any, in boxing history have been given such a chance to make it in America as Nassem Hamed, who takes on Kevin Kelley in New York. Page 46

Rugby union: Andrew Leeds, a former Australia international and rugby league player, has moved to Leicester on a temporary two-month contract. Page 45

Style secret: Wit, style and panache — the paper's secret to dressing well. Page 18

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BUSINESS EDITOR Patience Wheatcroft

FRIDAY DECEMBER 19 1997

Safeway bid rumours fanciful, says Asda chairman



Big appetites: Archie Norman, left, and Allan Leighton

By CARL MORTISHAW

ARCHIE NORMAN, chairman of Asda, poured cold water on suggestions that the food retailer was plotting a bid for Safeway. "A lot of this speculation is fanciful," he said yesterday and indicated that no contact had taken place with Safeway since the exploratory merger talks were called off in September.

Mr Norman's attempt to quell City rumours came as the company reported a surge in sales for the half year to November 15. Turnover grew

8.9 per cent, far outstripping its bigger rivals, Tesco and Sainsbury. Profits before exceptional items were up 18.7 per cent to £190 million, including a £43 million contribution from Gazley, Asda's property developing subsidiary.

City analysts were not entirely convinced by Mr Norman's comments on Safeway, noting that he had not completely ruled out the possibility of a bid. The food retail sector has been awash with rumours since Safeway approached Asda earlier this year to discuss the competition issues

of the two companies coming together. Each group has about 11 per cent of the UK food retailing market and the addition of Safeway would provide Asda with better coverage in the South East.

Asda, whose chief executive is Allan Leighton, increased market share by a full percentage point to 11.6 per cent. Much of the growth came from hypermarkets, which now total 15 and which showed sales growth of 36 per cent. Mr Norman said the number of hypermarkets could double over the next two

years. Capital expenditure for the full year is expected to be £490 million.

Asda's balance sheet gearing remains about 10 per cent but Mr Norman said the company had no plans to give capital back to shareholders: "I don't want to return capital and then go back to shareholders with a right issue." However, he said: "A capital repayment in a year or two's time that is a possibility."

Asda's gross margin remained flat during the year but Mr Norman said that there were signs that food

price inflation could return next year. He said the company was committed to selling at a 5 per cent to 10 per cent discount to its rivals.

Asda is investing heavily in take-away food outlets at its major stores. The company boasts that it is Britain's biggest seller of Chinese, Indian and Pizza take-aways.

Asda's dividend for the half year is up 12.3 per cent to 9.9p and earnings before exceptional of 4.86p are up almost 20 per cent.

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BUSINESS TODAY

STOCK MARKET INDICES

FTSE 100	5168.3	(-22.5)
Yield	3.15%	
FTSE All share	2417.28	(-9.78)
New York	16161.54	(-37.42)
Dow Jones	7926.57	(-30.84)*
S&P Composite	962.08	(-3.48)*

US MARKET

Federal Funds	8.75%	(5.75%)
Long Bond	102.25	(101.12)
Yield	8.87%	(6.01%)

LONDON MONEY

S&P International	7.7%	(7.7%)
Life long gilt future (Mar)	121.75	(121.50)

EUROPE

New York	1.0637*	(1.0610)
London	1.0607	(1.0480)
Paris	0.8554	(0.7847)
SPX	2.3852	(2.3638)
Yen	213.20	(209.53)
Euro Index	104.1	(103.1)

ASIAN MARKETS

London	1.7765*	(1.7737)
FTSE	1.7765*	(1.7737)
SPX	1.4388*	(1.4357)
Yen	128.55*	(127.08)
Euro Index	107.9	(107.6)

TOKYO

London	1.7765*	(1.7737)
FTSE	1.7765*	(1.7737)
SPX	1.4388*	(1.4357)
Yen	128.55*	(127.08)
Euro Index	107.9	(107.6)

MONDAY'S NEWS

London	1.7765*	(1.7737)
FTSE	1.7765*	(1.7737)
SPX	1.4388*	(1.4357)
Yen	128.55*	(127.08)
Euro Index	107.9	(107.6)

MONDAY'S CLOTHES

London	817.70	(817.50)
Clothes	828.75	(828.50)

London close

* denotes midday trading price

Clowes denies benefit charges

By JON ASHWORTH

PETER CLOWES, former head of the Barlow Clowes investment empire, appeared before magistrates in Macclesfield, Cheshire, yesterday, charged with benefits fraud.

Mr Clowes, 55, of Stockport, Greater Manchester, denies two charges of false accounting relating to the submission of jobseeker's allowances forms in November last year. He was remanded on unconditional bail to appear before the court again on January 8.

Million Firmin, Mr Clowes's solicitor, said after the hearing: "My client was building up a business, but the DSS appears to have thwarted his efforts. He will be pleading not guilty to the charges."

Barlow Clowes specialised in gilt-edged government securities. The company collapsed in May 1988 with losses of £190 million, prompting criticism of the Department of Trade and Industry, which licensed it.

Mr Clowes went into business in 1973 with Elizabeth Barlow. The company enjoyed success with a "bond washing" product, seeing funds under management grow from under £4 million in 1982 to more than £87 million in 1987.

Slowdown

Mortgage lending growth slowed rapidly in November, providing firm evidence that the five interest rate rises since the general election are beginning to take the heat out of the housing market.

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Plummet

Shares in Ferguson International fell from 130p to 91½p yesterday after the third profit warning from the paper and packaging group in six months and news that it will not pay a final dividend for the year to February 1998.

Page 27

Generale deal starts break-up of Hambros

By JASON NISSL

THE sale of the merchant banking side of Hambros for as much as £200 million could be announced in the next few weeks following the purchase of much of its corporate loan book by Generale Bank of Belgium for £30 million.

Generale is taking a portfolio of loans to 400 clients as well as 37 staff in the deal. Société Générale, the French bank which recently hired Nicola Horlick to head its fund management side, and Investec, the South African finance group which is strengthening its presence in the UK, are leading the fight for Hambros Bank.

Senior sources say the deal could be completed within days, though it is most likely not to emerge until after the new year.

The deal will leave Hambros as a holding company for the group's 52 per cent stakes in Hambros Countywide, the estate agency

chain, and Hambros Insurance Services, as well as its 45 per cent holding in Hambros Guinness Flight, the fund manager.

The management, led by Sir Cliffe Keswick, is expected to then break up the group, returning shares and cash to investors in the most tax-efficient way possible.

In recent months Hambros has been wracked with scandal, largely because of its work for Andrew Regan, the young entrepreneur who attempted to put together a £1.2 billion bid for the Co-operative Society. Revelations about the use of the confidential Co-op documents by the bid team led to the resignations of three Hambros directors, including its head of corporate finance, Nigel Paulding.

However, the bank still has a highly regarded private banking operation as well as a specialist bond dealing business.

Commentary, page 27

Three founders of Levis ad group pocket £30m

By CHRIS AYRES

THE AGENCY responsible for creating the Levis jeans advertisements has been partly sold to a private US company, making an estimated £30 million for its three founders.

The deal, which has been in negotiations for about 8 months, will see up to 49 per cent of Bartle Bogle Hegarty sold to Leo Burnett, the advertising network. BBH is well known for the Levis advertisement, which have made one hit wonders of rock bands featured in them and given old songs new life.

Burnett will benefit from the prestige of the UK agency which has won several awards, including The Queen's Award for Export Achievement—and BBH will gain a worldwide presence. Burnett has 33 offices in 72 countries, employs 8,000 people and has billings of about £3.6 billion.

John Bartle, joint chief executive of BBH, would not confirm yesterday that £30 million would be the exact figure paid by Burnett for its stake, but acknowledged: "It's not a million miles away."

Boeing production lines out of control, says FAA

FROM OLIVER AUGUST IN NEW YORK

BOEING, the manufacturer of the majority of the world's civil aircraft, was warned by the Federal Aviation Authority, the US safety regulator, that its production lines were "out of control".

FAA inspectors have repeatedly written to Boeing over the past few months to complain that it was leaving too little time for safety checks. Boeing is currently expanding its production facilities after an order surge and the merger with McDonnell Douglas.

In October, it had to stop production of its 737 and 747

planes after experiencing a string of problems. It now appears that the safety concerns were one of the reasons for the shutdown. At the time, the group was blaming shortage of labour and parts.

Boeing did not deny the FAA warnings, but played down their significance. A spokesman said: "The FAA is a really important part of our checks and balances system. We have not received any indication from the FAA that they are going to take any extraordinary measures."

An FAA inspector said in a memo that the rapid production increases "have created an environment that is out of control and the FAA cannot continue to support."

Boeing's inspection procedure was said to be "flawed" and the FAA was given "insufficient time" to test new designs.

Boeing experienced similar problems during an order surge in the 1980s.

The group hired an extra 17,000 people this year and said it will take a total \$2.6 billion charge this year and next to pay for the delays.

US seeks \$1m a day fine on Microsoft

FROM OLIVER AUGUST
IN NEW YORK

THE US Justice Department has stepped up its fight against Microsoft's monopoly position in the computer sector. It has asked a federal judge to rule the software house in contempt of last week's court order forcing it to sell its Internet software separately from its Windows 95 operating system.

The department also asked to have a \$1 million (£598,000) per day fine imposed from the end of next week. In its latest trust-busting move, it alleged that marketing changes made by Microsoft were designed to sabotage the court ruling.

Microsoft was ordered to discontinue sales and marketing of Windows 95 and its Internet Explorer to prevent it from dominating the Internet market. In response to this, Microsoft, which is headed by Bill Gates, is said to now force computer-makers to install versions of Windows 95 that do not incorporate Internet Explorer.

Joel Klein, the assistant attorney-general for antitrust, said: "Microsoft has gone from tying its products to tying the hands of its vendors. The more Microsoft continues its practices, the more consumers are harmed."

The group said it did not recognise the Justice Department's case. The new call for the imposition of the fine marks a deterioration of relations between the group and the Government. Officials from several US states are said to have met in secret to discuss a suit based on the Justice Department case. Japan is also said to have begun to investigate Microsoft's market position.

TOURIST RATES

	Bank Boys	Bank Girls
Australia S	2.61	2.44
Austria Sch	21.67	20.01
Bahrain D	2.40	2.29
Canada C	3.485	3.297
Cyprus Cyp	0.634	
Denmark Kr	11.78	10.89
Finland FM	9.24	8.83
France Fr	10.3	9.53
Germany DM	3.10	2.85
Greece Dr	489	450
Hong Kong \$	12.4	12.1
Iceland I	1.30	1.10
Ireland Pt	1.19	1.10
Israel Shek	0.24	0.58
Italy Lira	200.00	200.00
Japan Yen	267.35	260.00
Malta M	0.690	0.621
Mexico Mx G	3.502	3.207
New Zealand \$	1.37	1.27
Norway Kr	12.61	11.67
Portugal Esc	313.00	291.00
S Africa Rd	8.76	7.65
Spain Peseta	260.00	240.00
Sweden Kr	11.08	1.58
Switzerland Fr	2.53	2.31
Turkey Lira	340.00	320.00
USA \$	1.784	1.821

Rates for small denominations bank notes only as supplied by Barclays Bank PLC. Different rates apply to traveller's cheques. Rates as at close of trading yesterday.



Bill Gates faces the prospect of a federal judge ruling Microsoft in contempt of a court order forcing it to sell its Internet software as a separate item

Housing market starts to feel the effects of interest rate rises

BY ALASDAIR MURRAY
ECONOMIC CORRESPONDENT

MORTGAGE lending growth slowed rapidly in November, providing firm evidence that the five interest rate rises since the election are beginning to take the heat out of the housing market.

Figures released by the Building Societies Association showed mortgage lending falling 1.2 per cent in November, while separate British Bankers Association data also pointed to a slow-

down. Signs of a slowdown in the housing market were also supported by the latest housing price forecasts, which predict that growth is likely to be at around half the levels seen this year.

The Council of Mortgage Lenders said it expected house prices to rise by 5 to 6 per cent next year, although the number of transactions will also increase to 1.5 million.

Abbey National said it expected a period of "consolidation" in the market next year, with house price growth

moderating from 9 per cent this year to 5 per cent in 1998.

The BSA said building society gross advances fell from £1.89 billion in October to £1.65 billion. Net advances also slipped from £985 million to £825 million, while approvals declined from £1.67 billion to £1.54 billion.

Savings data, however, was surprisingly strong in a month when consumers normally increase withdrawals in the run-up to Christmas. Savings inflows totalled £665 million — the largest November figure

since 1988.

Adrian Coles, director-general of the BSA, said: "It appears there has been a slight cooling in the housing market recovery. This is likely to be a direct result of the five interest rate increases since the general election."

The BBA data also showed mortgage lending growth decreasing from £782 million to £690 million. Consumer credit slowed slightly from £536 to £526 million leaving total personal borrowing at £1.22 billion, down from £1.32 billion.

Total lending, however, increased by £4.68 billion.

M4, the measure of broad money supply, also fell back in November, annual growth slipping to 10.5 per cent (10.7 per cent). Simon Briscoe, director of research at Nikko Europe, said: "There has now been a flux of data indications that economic activity is no longer accelerating." But economists also said that the Bank of England probably wants a further deceleration in the rate of M4, before ruling out further interest rate changes.

Consolidated code for Stock Exchange

BY GRAHAM SEARLENT, FINANCIAL EDITOR

THE London Stock Exchange hopes to replace the Cadbury code rules on corporate governance next year. It will be superseded by a new consolidated code taking in revised versions of Cadbury and the recommendations of Sir Richard Greenbury's report on disclosure of executive pay.

At present, however, the Stock Exchange has no plans to enforce the new code. Like the Cadbury code, which covered such things as non-executive directors and audit committees, it will be appended to the exchange's listing rules and "sit alongside" them without being part of them. Quoted companies will be obliged to dis-

close in their annual reports how and whether they comply with the code's requirements. If they do not, they should also explain and justify why they have not complied.

The code will be the centrepiece of the final report of a committee headed by Sir Ronald Hampel, chairman of ICI, to review the earlier codes.

The Hampel committee is due to report in January. Its proposed code will then be sent for detailed consultation before replacing the Cadbury code. Sir Ronald's committee will only be reconvened if basic objections emerge.

Commentary, page 27

LMS wins permission for terminal

BY CHRISTINE BUCKLEY, INDUSTRIAL CORRESPONDENT

LONDON Merchant Securities, the property group, has won outline planning permission to build a luxury block of flats and a cinema on an eight-acre site at Greenwich near the Millennium Dome.

The group is now working on detailed planning permission.

LMS yesterday reported a £69 million (£15 million) pre-tax profit for the six months to September 30, helped by a previously reported £51.9 million exceptional gain.

The ordinary half-year dividend rises from 8.9p to 9.9p. Total earnings rose from 4.05p to 28.29p.

Kodak plans to cut further 6,000 jobs

BY CHRISTINE BUCKLEY, INDUSTRIAL CORRESPONDENT

UNCERTAINTY over thousands of jobs at Kodak in the UK increased yesterday when the US photographic company added 6,000 to the 10,000 job cuts it announced last month. These come on top of existing programmes, taking the full cut of staff worldwide to 19,000 out of a total of 50,000 workforce.

Kodak employs 5,500 in the UK — mainly at manufacturing sites at Harrow, near London, Annesley in Nottinghamshire and Kirkby, near Liverpool. A spokeswoman said the company had "no details about what is happening in the UK".

Kodak is to take a \$1.5 billion (£900 million) charge over the next two years.

BUSINESS ROUNDUP

Equitas takes over Lioncover liabilities

LIONCOVER INSURANCE, formed in 1987 to take on millions of pounds in liabilities from the PCW syndicates, has seen its liabilities transferred into Equitas. The company set up to reinsurance and run-off 1992 and prior year losses at Lloyd's. The move, originally scheduled as part of last year's reconstruction and renewal programme, was blocked at the last minute by the Department of Trade and Industry. Lioncover was locked in various disputes at the time, which were largely resolved this year, and the DTI felt its trading position was far from clear.

Some 2,886 names on the PCW syndicates were hit by £125 million of losses after a series of irregularities by PCW's agency directors. Peter Cameron-Webb and Peter Dixon, Lloyd's contributed £40 million to the PCW rescue and committed further funds from the central fund. By the end of 1996, losses born by the central fund had risen to £487 million. Equitas will assume full operational control of the run-off of Lioncover's liabilities. The premium for reinsurance of the liabilities is £601 million.

Allied Colloids hits back
ALLIED COLLOIDS has accused Hercules, the American group bidding £1.1 billion, of using "thoroughly misleading arguments" in its attempt to win control of the chemicals company. Colloids said Hercules had resorted to inappropriate comparisons in an effort to portray its results as mediocre. It said its performance had significantly improved, that the fall in return on capital was because of investment in manufacturing, and that the US acquisition of CPS had brought major benefits.

CAT wins drug rights

CAMBRIDGE ANTIBODY TECHNOLOGY has gained the right to develop treatments for six more disease targets as part of an agreement with Icos Corporation, a Nasdaq-listed drug development company. Icos will contribute some intellectual property and will draw on CAT's expertise in antibody engineering. Separately, Icos will pay CAT for its help in developing two further undisclosed targets. CAT said this may lead to it receiving milestone payments and royalties.

Belhaven encouraged

BELHAVEN BREWERY raised pre-tax profits to £2.8 million, from £2.1 million, in the six months to September 30. Earnings rose from 7.8p to 9.7p and the half-year dividend rises from 1.9p to 2.1p. The group said that trading since August had seen a continuation of the positive trends in the first half of the year. It said that the results for the second half will be materially influenced by trading conditions during the festive season, adding that early sales have been encouraging.

Watmoughs attacks bid

WATMOUGH'S, the printing group under fire from a £188 million bid by Quebecor, launched its defence campaign yesterday with a claim that its problems were behind it. Sir Derek Birkin, the chairman, said Watmoughs "is well positioned to generate increasing value for shareholders as an independent company". He added that the Quebecor offer "fundamentally undervalues" Watmoughs, shares in which fell 1.1p to 27.0p yesterday, against the 25.7p bid price.

Warner Estate rises

WARNER ESTATE shares rose from 237.5p to 247.5p after the group raised pre-tax profits to £12.25 million (£10.1 million) and its net asset value to 308p (259p) a share. Earnings rose to 19.15p (15.92p), out of which a final dividend of 8.75p will be paid, taking the total for the year to 12.9p (12.2p). Rents receivable rose 12.9 per cent to £15.7 million. Philip Warner, chairman, said: "I am confident that the company's strategy of diversification will continue to provide good returns in the coming year."

Dragon sells US asset

DRAGON OIL has sold its remaining American offshore oil and gas-producing assets for \$2.5 million (£1.49 million). Completion is expected shortly with an effective date of September 1, 1997. The assets, West Cameron 368 and Ship Shoal 222/225 offshore in the Gulf of Mexico, had attributable net reserves at the end of 1996 of about 400,000 barrels of oil equivalent. This compares with Dragon's estimated proven and probable reserves of more than 250 million barrels.

Recommended Offer

by
Merrill Lynch International
and
Deutsche Morgan Grenfell

on behalf of

Yule Catto & Co plc

(incorporated in England and Wales, number 98381)

to acquire the whole of the issued share capital of

Holiday Chemical Holdings PLC

Merrill Lynch International ("Merrill Lynch") and Deutsche Morgan Grenfell & Co. Limited ("Deutsche Morgan Grenfell") announce on behalf of Yule Catto & Co plc ("Yule Catto") that, by means of a formal offer document (the "Offer Document") dated and posted on 18 December 1997 and this advertisement, Merrill Lynch and Deutsche Morgan Grenfell are making an offer on behalf of Yule Catto to acquire all of the shares in Holiday Chemical Holdings PLC ("Holiday"). The full terms and conditions of the Offer (including details of the procedure for acceptance of the Offer) are set out in the Offer Document. Terms defined in the Listing Particulars dated 18 December 1997 in connection with the Offer have the same meanings in this advertisement. Merrill Lynch is also broker to Yule Catto and broker to the Offer.

A person who accepts the Offer will receive for each Holiday Share 105.3p in cash and 0.45 New Yule Catto Ordinary Shares. Accepting Holiday Shareholders may elect under the Mix and Match Election, subject to availability, to vary the proportions in which they receive New Yule Catto Ordinary Shares and cash in respect of their holdings of Holiday Shares. To the extent that elections can be satisfied, Holiday Shareholders will receive New Yule Catto Ordinary Shares instead of cash and vice versa on the basis of a price of 306.5p per New Yule Catto Ordinary Share. Accepting Holiday Shareholders may also elect to receive £1 nominal of Guaranteed Loan Notes for every £1 of cash consideration which would otherwise be receivable by them under the basic Offer. The Guaranteed Loan Notes will be transferable but no application will be made for them to be listed or dealt on any stock exchange.

Irrevocable undertakings to accept the Offer have been given by Holiday directors in respect of shares representing, in aggregate, 18.0 per cent, of Holiday's issued share capital (including shares representing 17.7 per cent of Holiday's issued share capital in respect of Dr. Michael Peagam's own beneficial interests and those of the trustees of a family trust held by him). These irrevocable undertakings would cease to be binding if, inter alia, a person other than Yule Catto (or a subsidiary of Yule Catto) makes an offer for Holiday and announces acceptances of such offer amounting to not less than 32 per cent of the issued share capital of Holiday.

The Offer is, by means of this advertisement, extended to all persons to whom the Offer Document may not be despatched and who hold, or who are entitled to have allotted to them Holiday Shares. Such persons are informed that copies of the Offer Document, the Form of Acceptance and the Listing Particulars, which relate to the New Yule Catto Ordinary Shares to be issued in connection with the Offer, are available for collection from The Royal Bank of Scotland plc, Register's Department, New Issues Section, P.O. Box 633, 5-10 Great Tower Street, London EC3R SER.

The Offer will initially be open for acceptance until 3.00 p.m. on 8 January 1998.

The Offer is not being made, directly or indirectly, in or into the United States, Canada, Australia or Japan and none of the Offer Document, the Form of Acceptance or the Listing Particulars are set out at Appendix 1 to the Offer Document.

Neither the New Yule Catto Ordinary Shares nor the Guaranteed Loan Notes to be issued pursuant to the Offer have been registered under the United States Securities Act of 1933, as amended, or under any relevant securities laws of any state or other jurisdiction of the United States or of Canada, Australia or Japan. Accordingly, unless an exemption under such Act or other laws is available, the New Yule Catto Ordinary Shares and the Guaranteed Loan Notes may not be offered, sold or delivered, directly or indirectly, in or into the United States, Canada, Australia or Japan.

This advertisement is not being published or otherwise distributed or sent in or into or from the United States, Canada, Australia or Japan, and so may render invalid any related purported acceptance of the Offer.

The contents of this advertisement, which have been prepared by and are the sole responsibility of Yule Catto, have been approved by Merrill Lynch and Deutsche Morgan Grenfell (both regulated by The Securities and Futures Authority Limited) for the purposes of Section 57 of the Financial Services Act 1986.

Merrill Lynch and Deutsche Morgan Grenfell are acting for Yule Catto and for no one else in connection with the Offer and will not be responsible to anyone other than Yule Catto for the protections afforded to customers of Merrill Lynch and Deutsche Morgan Grenfell or for giving advice in relation to the Offer.

The Directors of Yule Catto accept responsibility for the information contained in this advertisement. To the best of their knowledge and belief (having taken all reasonable care to ensure that such is the case), the information contained in this advertisement is in accordance with the facts and does not omit anything likely to affect the import of such information.

19 December 1997



DIANA, PRINCESS OF WALES - TRIBUTE

QUEEN - GEORGE MICHAEL - ANNE LINCOLN
BRUCE SPRINGSTEEN - NEAL MORSE - THE PRETENDERS - BOB STEVENS - PETE GABRIEL - ERIN - JANET SYRELLA
HEDDY NUTT & ALL STARS - ARETHA FRANKLIN - PUFF DADDY - CELINE DION - MICHAEL JACKSON - WHITNEY HOUSTON
DEE REEVE - MARINA CAREY - SEAL - DIANA KROSS - DEE GEEZ - TONY BRAZON

Morgan Grenfell, Kleinwort Benson, SG Warburg, Baring Brothers, Ackroyd & Smithers, de Zoet & Bevan, Rowe & Pitman, Wedd, Durlacher, Hoare Govett, Smith New Court, Mullens, Phillips & Drew, Wood Mackenzie, Henry Ansbacher, Strauss Turnbull and — in a few weeks' time — Hambrs. The City of London is no longer the preserve of the British.

The institutions that made the Square Mile great are now owned by Swiss, German, American or French financial conglomerates with a stomach for the sort of risks that made the London merchant banks the financiers of the world. And given the poor returns that most City merchant banks deliver, it is maybe better that the likes of Deutsche Bank or Merrill Lynch are tying up their balance sheets rather than NatWest or Barclays.

The passing of Hambrs into the hands of Société Générale of France or Investors of South Africa may bring only a small tear to the eye. The gradual decline of the once great institution — a bank for 153 years and a public company for 85 years — has been hastened by the Co-op scandal, which showed a lack of judgement and a lack of supervision brought on by the lack of any decent business coming through the door. The merchant bank had become largely irrelevant in the City, and has no one but itself to blame.

Hambrs has, in recent years, been an entrepreneurial bank in a way that went out of fashion perhaps a decade and a half ago. The bank was willing to put its money where its mouth was where it could see a pecuniary advantage. But it never had the balance sheet strength to back the sort of deals delivered by Goldman Sachs or SBC Warburg, and it did not have the reputational strength of Lazard Brothers or Schroders, which would bring the big deals without the balance sheet. Yet it could have had a role if it had concentrated on courting the sort of small and medium sized deal which is now bolstering the likes of Close Brothers, a bank that thrives on the scraps which fall from the dinner tables of its larger rivals.

Hambrs' imminent passing, though, raises a question about the banks that remain. Lazard is almost certain to stay independent — its partnership with the two Lazard Frères in New York and Paris will ensure it need not go cap in hand to a larger bank. Schroders and NM Rothschild are in a different situation. Schroders' super fund management side has put a value on the firm which surely might tempt

Bruno Schroder to cash in. And the need to build Schroders' New York operation or ditch it could bring the group closer to a US bank.

Rothschild carries on in its own sweet way. Like Hambrs it is becoming more and more irrelevant. But unlike Hambrs it is controlled by its chairman, Sir Evelyn, not its shareholders. But even Sir Evelyn must consider whether there is a future for a British-owned merchant bank.

Santa: bring me a soft landing

Gordon Brown would probably require a series of consultative papers before accepting the existence of Father Christmas. But if the Chancellor did decide to post a Christmas wish list to Santa, you can be sure that his greatest desire would be for a soft landing for the economy next year.

The latest data and forecasts are pointing with an unusual

COMMENTARY by our City Editor

in an increasingly competitive market. The housing market remains underpinned by some long-term structural trends — particularly a shortage of properties caused by a steady increase in the number of households. The housing market could be on the verge of entering the kind of era of sustainable growth that Brown must dream about.

Let sleeping fat cats lie

Sir Ronald Hampel's revising committee on corporate governance has long taken a *technique ad tedium* approach. This consists of taking due time for deliberation, finally concluding that there is nothing radically new to say on the subject post Cadbury and Greenbury. That thoughts need to be refined rather than toughened up and, most sincerely of all folks, please let's have no more committees than we all die of boredom.

Other factors should also help to take the market in check next year. Mortgage interest rate relief is set to be whittled down further and ultimately abolished. Low inflation — even if it keeps a check on mortgage rates — also makes gains from house price rises seem less attractive, while too many people still clearly remember the bitter experience of negative equity.

This is not to say the market is in danger of collapsing. Most forecasts predict an improvement in transactions next year, as more properties come onto the market, and lending should enjoy another good year's growth

business. It was to persuade governments, especially a potentially hostile Labour government, that something is being done. So ministers, rightly wary of such a populist minefield, do not have to undertake the impossible job of framing laws to curb the excesses of corporate megamaniacs and their pet cat fads.

Subject to consultation next spring, the Hampel "supercode" will have no more exalted status than the Cadbury code it replaces. The Stock Exchange will append it to its listing rules, but not incorporate it in them. Enforcement therefore lies in the hands of shareholders, who are perennially inclined to make exceptions for just the sort of entrepreneurial heroes the code is intended to apply to.

This would surely not deter the Government from legislating. By contrast, the boredom factor looks a winner.

Losing friends

IT IS A strange irony that the more Dresdner Kleinwort Benson loses senior directors, the more money the German-owned merchant bank appears to make. But after a year when it has lost its two most prominent financiers — Simon Robertson and David Clementi — as well as the German whose increased role contributed to the departure of Robertson and Clementi, DKB is looking both careless and increasingly friendless.

Ferguson slides on payout and profits warning

BY GEORGE SIVELL

SHARES in Ferguson International fell from 130p to 91½p yesterday after another profit warning from the paper and packaging group and news that it will not pay a final dividend for the year to February 1998. The shares traded at a high of 428p in 1994.

An unchanged interim dividend of 4½p was paid to shareholders on December 5. Last year, Ferguson, which makes labels for retail customers such as Safeway and C&A, paid an unchanged final dividend of 8½p.

Stephen Gutteridge, who was appointed chief executive on October 1, has indicated he would retire next year, when a successor would be appointed.

Hartstone plunges further into red

BY CHRIS AYRES

HARTSTONE, the troubled hosiery and leather goods company, plunged further into the red during the six months ending September 30, with pre-tax losses deepening from £2.1 million to £34.5 million.

The company said it had disposed of its loss-making businesses and would concentrate on Etienne Aigner in the US and Azmar in Spain.

Hartstone has closed its US operations of Michael Stevens, one of its leather goods businesses, and has scaled down and reorganised its UK leather operations. It has also sold Rubo Ledermann, its leather goods business

in Holland. This strategy is expected to release about £8 million in cash.

Shaun Dowling, chairman, said: "The directors will now review the options for realising proper value for shareholders from the remaining businesses". He said an extraordinary general meeting would be called to organise a share buyback of 10 per cent of Hartstone's equity.

The company's turnover fell 9.3 per cent during the period to £57 million, with losses per share deepening from 8.9p to 10.9p. An interim dividend of 0.16p will be paid on February 16.

Yesterday, Ferguson said that 150 jobs would go in its food and textiles labelling division as part of cost cuts. The measures will result in an initial £2 million of annual cost savings for the company in the financial year to February 1999, said Mr Gutteridge. He added: "The current drive to cut costs is only part of the overall plan to restore sales and profitability. There will be more cost savings to come and further redundancies are likely to follow."

The 10 per cent cut in the 1,900-strong labelling workforce will leave the group with around 2,000 staff. Apart from the core labelling activities, Ferguson owns Morplan, a fashion mail-order business, and two printing units. These account for £30 million-£35 million of annual sales.

Analysis had been expecting pre-tax profits of between £8.2 million and £8.4 million before exceptional for 1997-98.

They said forecasts are now likely to be pruned back to about £4 million for 1997-98.

At yesterday's price, Ferguson is valued at just £37 million. Mr Gutteridge, asked if he thought the group was now vulnerable to takeover, said it had always been a potential target given its management and trading troubles over the past few years.

Ferguson's current trading position was "no reflection" on Mr Cassidy's chairmanship or the time he had devoted to the shareholder campaign at Liberty, said Mr Gutteridge.

He said the board had been "united behind" Mr Cassidy.

Tempus, page 28

Reg Vardy slows down

BY CHRIS AYRES

REG VARDY, the motor distribution group, yesterday dismissed the City by reporting only a 7 per cent rise in pre-tax profits for the six months to October 31, from £7.9 million to £8.4 million. The company's shares fell 7p to 241½p.

The City has come to expect more rapid growth from the group, which is one of the few

businesses of its kind to benefit from rationalisation in the car industry.

Peter Vardy, the chairman, said: "One analyst thought we would come in with more, but our reorganisation in Wolverhampton cost £400,000 and the death of Diana, Princess of Wales, cost us £600,000. That's a million pounds of non-recurring costs. When people under-

stand that, the share price should start to rise."

The company, which has 51 dealerships, said it was on target to take vehicle sales for the full year to 100,000. It also hopes to build nine dealerships, for about £2.5 million each, before the year ends. The expansion will be partly funded through borrowing — gearing is 8 per cent — and from the £27 million raised last year from a rights issue.

Turnover for the period was £410 million (£345 million) and earnings per share fell from 10.7p to 10.4p. An interim dividend of 2.8p, up from 2.6p, will be paid on April 30.

Tempus, page 28

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Cadbury decision today on £420m deal

FROM OLIVER AUGUST
IN NEW YORK

CADBURY SCHWEPPES, the drinks group, could decide today to spend around £420 million to buy two US bottling companies in an effort to catch up with Coca-Cola and Pepsi, its main competitors.

Beverage America of Michigan and Select Beverages of Illinois are part of the network of independent bottlers that processes 44 per cent of Cadbury's brands, including Dr Pepper and Seven Up.

Cadbury, which holds a regular board meeting today, is considering a move to build up its own US bottling network, similar to the networks of Coke and Pepsi affiliates.

A Cadbury spokeswoman said: "We want to support our brands appropriately. A consolidation process is taking place among the independent bottlers and we need to make sure that our brands and their route to market are protected."

Analysts said Cadbury would have to spend much more than the estimated \$500 million (£300 million) for Beverage America and the \$200 million for Select Beverages. To build up its own network, even one considerably smaller than Coke's or Pepsi's, the group would have to invest several billion dollars.

Acquisition talks with the two bottlers are said to be at an advanced stage and an announcement could be made by the end of the month.

The bottling process is closely linked to the distribution system which has a big influence on the shelf placement of the drink brands. Cadbury could provide extra capital needed by the independents to compete with Coke's and Pepsi's more sophisticated systems.

Michael Smith, a Morgan Stanley analyst, said: "The rationale behind a purchase would be to help to provide capital to invest in cold distribution outlets like vending machines and to consolidate plants."

support in the City, its shares rising 5p to 108½p after having fallen 25p to 103½p since the demerger. Fine Art said that sales had risen 2 per cent at its home shopping division and improved at the fundraising division. How-

ever, the strength of sterling and strikes in France and Canada would cause overseas sales to fall.

Keith Chapman, chairman,

said the group was set to grow organically and "if appropriate" by acquisition. Pre-tax

losses for the six months to September 30 were £12.4 million (£5.2 million), with total turnover falling to £74 million (£77 million). Losses were 14.7p (14.33p) a share. An interim dividend of 3.9p (3.7p) will be paid on January 26.

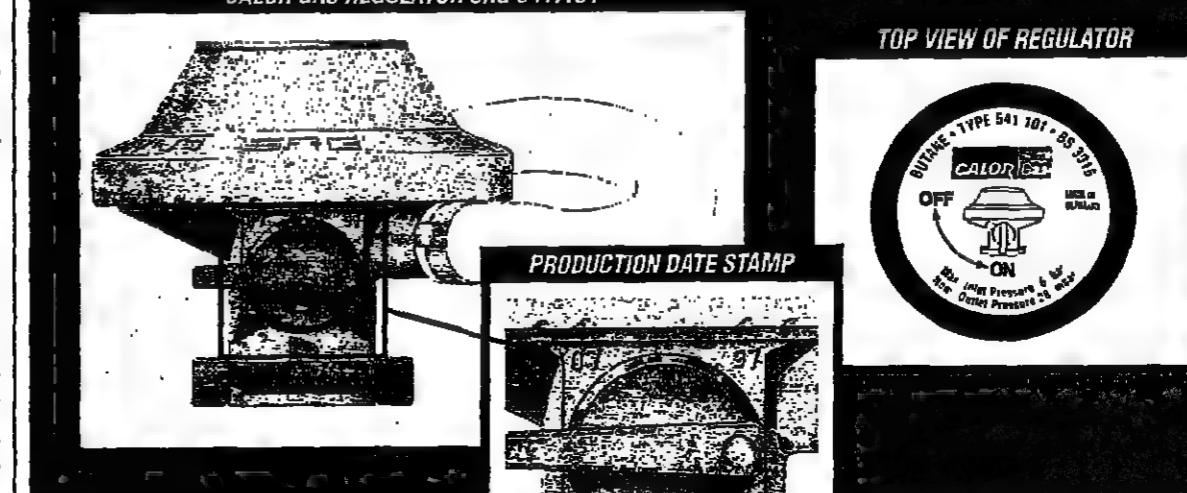
Turnover rose by nearly 2 per cent, from £71 million to £72 million. Losses per share of 0.15p deepened to 0.69p, and no interim dividend will be paid.

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Evidence has come to light of a potential safety problem associated with the SRG Butane Regulator 541.101 manufactured by the German company, Schulz and Rackow between September 1996 and November 1997. A very small number of these regulators have been found to fail quality control checks which could result in gas escaping from this product.

CALOR GAS REGULATOR SRG 541.101



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Look at the diagram above. If the production date stamped on the regulator is between September 1996 (stamped 09.96) and November 1997 (stamped 11.97)

■ Do not use your gas appliance.

■ Take the appliance complete with regulator to your authorised Calor retailer, who will fit a replacement regulator for you free of charge.

■ If you are unable to do this, contact your retailer to arrange a visit to undertake this procedure, free of charge.

The bottling process is closely linked to the distribution system which has a big influence on the shelf placement of the drink brands. Cadbury could provide extra capital needed by the independents to compete with Coke's and Pepsi's more sophisticated systems.

Michael Smith, a Morgan Stanley analyst, said: "The rationale behind a purchase would be to help to provide capital to invest in cold distribution outlets like vending machines and to consolidate plants."

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Brown's busy squirming may invite a bleak early winter

As 'inflation nutters' go, the Chancellor could be the biggest of them all

Gordon Brown's testimony to the Treasury Select Committee this week was a revelation. For more than two hours, the Chancellor was buffeted by MPs on all sides of the political divide. He was pronounced guilty of dangerous social engineering for cutting benefits to lone mothers, accused of penalising prudent savers by planning an upper limit on individual Savings Accounts (ISAs), lambasted for letting down pensioners, called to account for failing to publish comprehensive public spending tables in the Pre-Budget Report, goaded for taking an unduly pessimistic view of public finances and blamed for sterling's strength.

But, whatever the line of attack, Mr Brown hammered home the same message with awesome consistency. What the country needs, beyond all else, is stability with low inflation. Pensioners should not be unduly worried that rising council tax bills are set to dwarf their winter-warmer payments. What they need is a 'stable economy with low inflation'. Exporters are understandably worried about the strength of the pound but what really matters is that sterling is helping to control inflation. Stability is the most important thing for the unemployed. Companies will not invest if they feel that inflation is getting out of control.

The thought suddenly occurred that Mr Brown's decision to hand over power to set interest rates to the inflation nutters at the Bank of England may have been entirely inspired. It may have saved us from the greatest inflation nutter of them all.

Mr Brown is a man possessed by old Labour demons. He, like so many other politicians and economists of this generation, is obsessed with the economic mismanagement of the 1980s, when the strength of growth was woefully underestimated, the Government pumped up demand for electoral reasons, inflation exploded and bust followed. As if this horror was not enough to keep the Chancellor awake at night, he is desperately hung up on old Labour's reputation as the party that spent and taxed its way out of trouble.

At the Treasury Select Committee this week, Mr Brown was quietly and firmly taken to task by Ruth Kelly, Labour MP for Bolton West, who has the unique vantage point of having come to the Commons from the Bank of England. Her point was that the Chancellor appeared to have adopted the most pessimistic assumptions possible on the public finances. She noted that the Chancellor's fiscal



Gordon Brown was clapped into the Treasury on May 2 on a ticket of radical supply side change to the labour market and the welfare state

arithmetic was based on the assumption that the sustainable growth rate of the economy is 2.25 per cent, a figure given that growth has averaged 2.5 per cent over the past 50 years. She asked why the Chancellor was not taking into account the considerable temporary inflows to the Exchequer from the abolition of advance corporation tax (ACT), why the Treasury was assuming a long-term downward trend in VAT receipts and whether it was realistic to expect no privatisation proceeds at all. The probability that all these would turn out at the pessimistic end of realistic expectations was, Ms Kelly, extremely unlikely.

Mr Brown seems intent on pursuing an ultra-cautious line on fiscal policy and, in his Pre-Budget Report, seemed to be pleasing the Bank of England, to do the same on monetary policy. Whereas the Bank is looking for inflation to fall throughout next year, the Treasury is forecasting a rise, despite expectations of a sharp slowdown in domestic growth and a chill, deflationary wind blowing in from Asia.

The conviction in the City is that the Chancellor wants the impending economic slowdown out of the way as soon as possible, exacerbated if necessary by maintaining an unnecessarily tight squeeze on public spending (perhaps, if he is not careful, even to the point of recession if Asia has a large impact), so that the economy is growing and Treasury coffers flowing when Labour sets about trying to win a second term. This may be unfair cynicism. It may be that the Chancellor's demons have

genuinely got the better of him. Whatever the truth of his thinking, excessive prudence has its dangers, not least to his own long-term programme of microeconomic reform. Seeking further improvement to the supply side of the economy, to ensure that the economy can deliver more growth and jobs in the future, is an admirable aim but, if the macroeconomy lets him down, Mr Brown will fail.

Above all, he needs the economy to enjoy a soft landing. The Chancellor told the Select Committee that low inflation was the most important ingredient for those seeking jobs and wondering whether to invest — but economic growth is the pre-requisite for both. Companies do not invest because of low

inflation but because they see demand ahead. They employ people for the same reason.

Mr Brown is, of course, set on being powerless to determine whether the economy's landing is hard or soft. He has voluntarily strapped himself into a Conservative straitjacket on fiscal policy (and means to hamstring himself in the longer-term through his fiscal responsibility code) and handed monetary policy to the Bank. It may come as a relief to some that politicians cannot entirely have their wicked way with the economic cycle but the thought that we have never been so dependent on the good sense of a group of academic economists sitting in Threadneedle Street does make one a little queasy. Mr Brown's determination to have nothing to

do with running macroeconomic policy is a big gamble and one that defines his Chancellorship so far. It may be proved foolhardy but it is, without doubt, definite. It is also a very different type of inactivity to the sort employed by Kenneth Clarke, who put the macroeconomy on cruise control, when it needed nothing else, and left the microeconomy alone in the dog days of a Government that had no policy ideas left and no will to think up new ones.

Mr Brown's people may not be running the economy but they are feverishly busy. Their brief, long before they were clapped into the Treasury on May 2, was that a well-managed macroeconomic policy was the bare minimum for a reforming government and should take up as little time as possible. They argued that they would stand or fall on whether they could push through radical supply side change to the labour market and to the welfare state.

How much is actually getting done is extremely difficult to tell and we will have to wait for the findings of various reviews and special committees but, before they report, a definite pattern of priorities has emerged. Even within the existing control total, Mr Brown has shown that he means to redistribute public spending to priority areas. The lone mothers episode is only the first skirmish in a drive to save money on benefits (permanent savings if more return to the labour force) and re-channel it into education, education, education.

Perhaps more surprisingly, the Chancellor is not averse to

old-fashioned income redistribution, a fact that ought to cheer some of those critics from the left who voted against the Government last week. For all the public relations incompetence of the launch of ISAs, led by Geoffrey Robinson, the beleaguered Paymaster General (and, of course, the breach of trust with existing savers), Mr Brown is perfectly within his rights to decide that the Government has better things to spend its money on than tax relief for top rate taxpayers.

Mr Brown's team has admirable conviction and vigour but the ISA episode offers warning signals. For a Chancellor committed to long-term structural reform, the new policy seemed to be hopelessly short on detail (even as a consultative document) and its launch almost farcical, with nobody able to answer detailed questions.

It makes one wonder whether policy making has become too centralised in Mr Brown's office of special advisers or, on the other hand, contracted out to the great and good of the private sector, who may be bright and able but do have their hands full running large businesses. It also begs the question whether the detailed technical knowledge of Treasury civil servants is being mobilised as it should be.

Despite Mr Brown's oft-repeated desire for more open government, there is a closed-minded streak, a "you are either with us or against us" mentality that sometimes borders on paranoia. Given that this Chancellor is so keen to consult widely, this attitude cannot be healthy for the success of his programme.

Accountants seek theme to symbolise their union

Jon Ashworth reads the runes for KPMG and Ernst & Young

Not the artist formerly known as Prince, so much as the accountancy firm formally known as KPMG and Ernst & Young. This time next year, two of the oldest names in accounting could have disappeared — replaced by a symbol, instantly recognisable anywhere in the world. Sir Tim Bell, one-time adviser to Baroness Thatcher, has been asked to devise an emblem.

Crafting KPMG and Ernst & Young into a universally acceptable symbol or name is but one of the challenges thrown up by the proposed merger of the two firms — if it goes ahead. Regulators in Washington and Brussels are deliberating whether the concentration of power in professional services has already gone far enough. Approval could follow next summer with implementation by October 1.

Colin Sharman, KPMG's UK senior partner and proposed chairman of the international firm, concedes that the fate of the deal rests with the competition authorities. The same is true of Price Waterhouse and Coopers & Lybrand — pursuing their own merger.

Sharman is confident of winning the regulators over. "We're confident that we can persuade them that not only is this necessary for us to be able to continue to be effective in the market place, but also that the worries which were expressed in certain narrow sectors of the market about reductions in competition are unfounded, and should not be allowed to prevent the merger taking place."

UK finance directors — notably at British Airways, Rentokil Initial, Bass and National Power — have expressed dispute at the proposed deals. They say the shift from six firms to four — or even three, if Arthur Andersen were to link with Deloitte Touche Tohmatsu — has worrying implications. Fees could be forced up, and choice reduced.

Not so, insists Sharman, who says the "noise level" surrounding the merger is largely a UK phenomenon. "We have to persuade people that what we're doing is sensible, and is something which is not going to destroy competition. I think all the evidence is that it isn't." He points to the last round of consolidation in the industry, which saw the Big Eight become the Big Six. "There is absolutely no evidence whatsoever that the reduction from eight to six either reduced competition or resulted in an increase in fee levels. Exactly the opposite appears to have happened. Audit fees in real terms have been falling. Profits and turnovers of the FTSE-100 have been increasing. Secondly, most

of the regulators could yet scupper both sets of deals, forcing the firms to look at other fund-raising alternatives. Put simply, a merger remains the easiest way of raising money. Sharman intends to hammer the message home. "The regulators have shown every sign of being open. It's up to us to convince them of the merits of the case."

Son of Pru

ONE good thing about all the advertisements for perfume, alcohol and toys that swamp our television screens at this time of year is that they keep the offices "The Man from the Pru" safe off the box. These, of course, feature Sir Peter Davis in various relaxed poses — reading a book, walking by the beach, in fact everything but keeping a close eye on his direct sales operation.

Who came up with these great adverts and who persuaded Sir Peter to feature himself in them? The trial

Believable

FOR a few years now Lord Grade, five days short of his 91st birthday, has been talking with his customary enthusiasm about his latest project, a film called *Something to Believe In*. Now it is actually going to see the light of day. The film — "no sex, no violence, no bad language" has finished shooting. The cigar-chomping Lew has already sold continental European rights to the Kirch group of Germany and there is considerable interest from other parts of the

Meanies

I SEE the ghosts of Christmas past, present and future have some work to do. The Low Pay Unit has announced its 1997 Scrooge awards for the hardest-hearted employers, offering the worst deals to their staff. Among the nominees are a car park company in the Midlands, which was paying its staff £2.74 an hour while charging a local authority £5.20 an hour for the same employee.

Sans Liberty

TIME for an update on the Denis Cassidy index. As I pointed out a couple of months ago, the Tyneside

Age appears to be no barrier for the cigar-chomping Lord Grade

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Time, ladies and gentlemen, please! The words have a melancholy ring, do they not? Especially when they cut short a riotous session during which some estimable reveller — temporarily loaded, perhaps, from backing a 25-1 winner in the 2.30 at Newmarket — has announced that "the drinks are on me".

Everyone has quaffed prodigiously. Life has sweetened briefly. But now the saloon door is propped open. A blast of cold air and even colder reality hits the flushed faces. The mortgage is overdue, the car won't start, the marriage is crumbling, the kids are ungovernable, the job is unbearable, and the in-laws are staying for Christmas. The party's over. The pain is back.

But why did these doleful fantasies trudge through the morbid thicket of my mind yesterday, as Parliament debated the new Lottery Bill? After all, it is a long overdue piece of remedial legislation. It frees lottery money to be spent on what really matters: people, not buildings. It allows the

Last orders in the lottery saloon

Arts Council to adopt what Chris Smith, Culture Secretary, hilariously calls a "holistic approach to the quantum total of funding available to the arts". What that means in English (I think) is that lottery money and Treasury money now goes into the same pot. It means, above all, that the short-term future of dozens of tottering arts organisations is probably assured. In the long term, of course, the Treasury might cut its cultural expenditure to a pittance, or the Government might divert yet more lottery money to "new opportunities" (ie, propping up health or education). But those are tomorrow's battles. The main thing today is that the ring-fencing of arts lottery money — which lavishly refurbished theatres while leaving theatre companies to crash — is abolished.

We have been through an amazing three years. We shall not see

such an era of conspicuous cultural expenditure again. But now time has been called. The bar is closed: the man who bought all the drinks has vanished. The era of big capital projects is over. Unfortunately, however, one or two stragglers have only just arrived in the pub. They were promised free booze, and are distraught to discover that the cellar is dry.

Most prominent of the latecomers is the South Bank Centre. You can understand the frustration of the people there. Their grant application has been four years in discussion. It has been through more rewrites than Liz Taylor's marriage certificate. Matching funding, including a breathtaking £17 million gift from Paul Hamlyn, is in place — but precariously dependent on a £75 million Arts Council lottery grant. Last week the Arts Council finally said yes. More than that, it described Lord

Rogers's glass roof scheme as "essential and visionary". Champagne all round, then? Not exactly. No sooner had the Arts Council said yes than it said no. Or rather, it issued a statement of such Delphic obscurity that only

intense textual deconstruction disclosed an admission that there is actually no money left in the lottery kitty to fund such a huge capital project. Nor if the Arts Council also wants to fund equally "essential and visionary" building projects in Bristol, Gateshead and Stratford.

There followed a nimble rendition of that famous English gavotte *Pass the Buck*, in which the Arts Council appealed to the Culture Secretary to finagle an accountancy sleight-of-hand that would allow future lottery income to be spent now. No way, said Smith. The bar is closed: no more free drinks, and definitely no credit.

That is tough on the South Bank, because actually its scheme is "essential and visionary". Indeed, London's future as a world-class musical capital depends on making the Festival Hall and its gaudily concrete aprons a place

where people want to go. Even yesterday secret talks were going on to save the scheme. But the harsh probability is that the South Bank may have missed last orders in the lottery saloon.

I am sorry about that. But it was an accident waiting to happen.

The backlash against the "metropolitan snouts in the trough" perception of the past three years was bound to come. However much the lottery may have improved the country's "cultural fabric", there is no doubt that several huge lottery handouts have been public-relations disasters. We now need a period of quiet, steady, uncontroversial investment in quality performances, audience development and arts education. No more *grands projets*. Just hundreds of *petites victoires*. Let's hope Smith's Lottery Bill provides the basis for them.

In that respect, one small but revolutionary innovation of the past three years must be retained. That is Arts For Everyone Express, which channelled small grants from lottery funds (£5,000 maximum) to amateur and youth groups across Britain in a pilot scheme this year. At a stroke it did more to counter the "elitist" charge against the arts than 50 years of orthodox subsidy. In just three months it made 5,325 awards, reaching approximately 240,000 performers and an estimated audience of five million.

Those are astonishing figures for an outlay of just £21 million. To put it in context: the Millennium Dome would need to attract 200 million visitors to produce a comparable return on its £800 million cost. The Arts Council is rightly criticised for many of its decisions, or indecisions. But making this vastly wide-ranging scheme work was admirable. It must become a permanent fixture. There may be no more free drinks in the lottery saloon. But free peanuts? Those we can surely still afford.

THEATRE: Gogol's triumphant contest in hysteria; fairytale premiere for a Sondheim musical; and a curious Bardic transformation

Over the top on a trapeze

The Government Inspector
Almeida

You know it as soon as Ian McDiarmid scuttles on to a set whose plank walls and floor are so askew, they would surprise even the architect who was employed by the old woman who lived in a shoe. Moreover, McDiarmid's Mayor looks like a cross between a poisonous prawn and a disintegrating ferret, and he snaps "a bit of whisky if ye please" at his fellow-functionaries. Jonathan Kent's production of Gogol's great comedy is clearly not going to be a conventional one.

Actually, it is hard to say what a conventional revival would be. This is a play that in its time has been directed by Stanislavsky and Meyerhold and a million Marxists. It has been performed realistically, farcically, didactically and as a horrifying nightmare. It has, I suspect, less often been played as a grotesque mix of pacy knockabout and seedy fun in which a Fauntleroy from an oddly English St Petersburg is mistaken for a government inspector by 19th-century Russian provincials who have borrowed their accents and some of their ethics from *Transplanting*.

As it turns out, Gogol can take it. The evening is highly enjoyable, thanks particularly to the imagination of the two lead actors and the adaptors. John Byrne's Scots version is pretty free. My translation does not require the Mayor to reprove his education super-premo for hiring a games teacher who has been "caught having relations with a piece of gymnasium equipment", ie, the school's vaulting horse. Nor are there references to strong wine "with the Ivan the

strong wine" to the Ivan the

strong wine

Poop-poop! It's Sir John

The Merry Wives of Windsor
Barbican

Ian Judge has a lucrative talent for transforming Shakespeare's plays into National Heritage fairytales. It takes real ingenuity, however, to turn the Bard's most parochial comedy into *The Wind in the Willows*. As played by that suave old buffer, Leslie Phillips, Sir John Falstaff is a magnificent Toad. With his pregnant gut squeezed into an implausibly tweedy Elizabethan suit, Phillips turns the melancholy Toad into an endearing egomaniac with a greasy orange toupee and a supernatural belief in his sexual prowess.

How the fat are fallen, especially when they try to seduce the bored housewives of Windsor. The weasels are

as much to blame as Tim Goodchild. In a fit of pastoral authenticity, he succeeds in making early 17th-century Windsor look like the residential graveyard it is today. The local feud is between the publican and a French physician, and the serious gossip is the gulling of the lackadaisical Knight by Mistresses Ford and Page.

After teasing us with half a dozen brilliantly delivered lines, Phillips's Falstaff is thrown into a laundry basket and dumped in the Thames. The role of the caddish smooth seducer comes so easily to him that it becomes tedious when he's not around. Edward Petherbridge has to work harder for his come-uppance as the jealous husband, Master Ford, pursuing Falstaff like Inspector Clouseau. It's a nice, messy piece of acting that makes the wives look far more wretched than the men.

The rest of the performances feel fatally disconnected from Ian Judge's Willowey production. Accents shamelessly slate all over the place. Cartoon caricatures light the way. For what it's worth, Christopher Luscombe has an indecently camp way with Slender and by far the best grip on the play's slippery language. But the steal of the night is Guy Henry's physician, who turns his French mispronunciations into very British scatological jokes. Why commute to the 17th century, however, when you can get all this on the 5.0pm from Paddington?

So much for pantomime.

Yes, this is a clever cast, but it is also infuriatingly smug.

Few designers are capable of filling the Barbican stage with



Tom Hollander as the overgrown infant Khlestakov in Jonathan Kent's marvellously unconventional production of *The Government Inspector*

Music master's early lesson

The story of this musical is the stuff of fairytales. It should have been Stephen Sondheim's professional debut back in the mid-1950s, but the producer died and the show was put on hold. The hold lasted 40 years, but the fairytale bit is not that a prince at last woke the sleeping beauty, but that rescue came from the management of a fringe theatre — the metaphors break down here so I'll abandon them — who heard the music, mounted a concert version with the composer in the audience, and was given the go-ahead to produce a Sondheim premiere.

At three hours the show is too long for its content, but presumably a feeling for its historical interest discouraged leaving anything out. Catching snippets of the later Sondheim in the twists of the music and the dapper rhymes is certainly fun. "I was pouring coffee, you lit a cigarette. After that I forgot." The conversational tone is unmistakable, as is the skill at slipping everyday experiences into a song which will then be repeated from a second, tarter point of view.

The book is by Julius and Philip Epstein, the authors of *Casablanca*, fondly recalling the comrade Brooklyn of

their youth in the early months of 1929. Gene is their hero, son of a traveller in ladies' underwear but dreaming of joining Manhattan's high society. Every American's duty is to climb to the top but Gene relies on fantasy, acting big and losing his buddies' money. But they forgive him because he's Gene.

The lyrics sometimes show Sondheim putting an ironic take on this tale of the American's right to be ambitious, so long as he finally settles for love and the childhood neigh-

bourhood. One of the buddies sings "All of us are for hood", but he means motherhood etc. The characters are a million blocks from the Jets and Sharks Sondheim would soon be giving voice to.

The ensemble work is nifty,

though the buddies' attitude to dames is charmless. The co-directors (Carol Metcalfe, Clive Page) achieve much on

a stage that turns from front porch to hotel steps, speakeasy

and other deftly suggested settings by Bridget Kinnar.

Sam Newman makes a per-

sonable, sure-voiced Gene,

and Anna Francolini's clear

voice, singing the melody high

above the piano and sax,

catches the style of the period

particularly well. The occasion

is gently pleasant but one can

see why Sondheim was con-

tent to turn his attention

elsewhere all those years ago.

JEREMY KINGSTON

MARILYN KINGSTON



Unmistakably Sondheim: Sam Newman and Anna Francolini dream of Manhattan

Lyric Theatre Hammersmith
Until 17 January

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JAMES CHRISTOPHER

When is a revival not a revival? Most literally, I suppose, when a production all but expires in the process — and that is what seems to have happened at Leeds. Amid much lofty talk of the need to reinvent, to evolve, to break new ground, Annabel Arden has created an entirely new staging of *The Magic Flute* for Opera North.

Her enchanting New Age fairytale of 1994 has given way to a crab drama which seems stuck at the first day of rehearsal. Judging by the purely material aspects of Roswitha Gerlitz's new design, the shoestring on which it was made to hang would clearly not have extended to a respectable revival of the original production. But this, we are assured, is not the point. Arden was determined to reinvent; and it is imagination and insight, not money, which is lacking here.

No one, I am sure, would mind the simple corrugated-iron backdrop: it is

Rough and unready enchantment

OPERA
True Justice
Grand Opera
Leeds

defly used and forms a chic, glinting surface for the lunar beauty of the Queen of Night (a valiant Cara O'Sullivan) and the golden sunrise of Sarastro (a stalwart Clive Bayley). And both the beastie made of chairs and old rope, and the temple portals formed by three fluorescent tubes, would grace any London gallery.

Even the market-stall fur-fabric

was eroded further still by the indisposition of Jamie MacDougall, though Neill Archer's Tamino is both sensitive and robust. Both Margaret Richardson and her understudy were too ill to sing; Richardson, however, mimed the part of Pamina while Susannah Glynn sang quite beautifully from a music stand in the wings. Eric Roberts was a somewhat threadbare Papageno. Margaret Price his luscious Papagena.

As chorus and orchestra were not working under sufficient duress, Brad Cohen, conducting, takes the entire opera at such a ludicrously fast speed that ensembles are gabbled and much of the orchestral playing garbled. I would like to think that things might improve once the show is on the road, but with both conductor and director riding shamelessly roughshod over Mozart, I am pessimistic.

HILARY FINCH

David Sinclair looks back on a 1997 of unexpected highs and lows – and the growth of a chilling trend



In 1997, Elton John's *Candle in the Wind* became the best-selling single ever; Geri and the Spice Girls sang on; Liam Gallagher and Oasis saw the wheels come off Britpop; and Prodigy — Keith Flint to the fore — attracted MPs' wrath

Writing on this page two weeks ago, my colleague Nick Kelly observed: "If there's one thing missing from the whole Oasis phenomenon, it's a sense of perspective." It is a point which could equally well apply to 1997 itself, a year in which the key players in British pop seemed to vacillate between pinnacles and troughs at wildly implausible extremes.

Naturally, Oasis were the most obvious example. With a mind-boggling first-day sales tally of 356,000 units, their third album, *Be Here Now*, became the fastest-selling album of all time. But by the end of the year, after the band had put in a series of increasingly workday concerts, Chris Evans was seen trying to "revive" a copy of the album on his show *TFI Friday* with a defibrillator machine, confirming a growing feeling among many of those who had bought the record in such haste that they were now having to repeat at leisure.

Evans found his own fortunes swinging in the opposite direction. He started the year by storming out

Highlights of the fast show

of his much-covered breakfast show slot at Radio 1, prompting some commentators to suggest that his glory days had gone the way of the Britpop phenomenon he had done so much to promote. But by the end of the year, he had bought a controlling interest in Virgin Radio and emerged as a new media mogul, a heavier hitter than he had ever been as a mere DJ.

As predicted, Prodigy swept in the top of the British and American charts with their album *The Fat of the Land* and swept up awards wherever they were being offered, from *Q* magazine's to MTV's. However, the release of *Smack My Black Up* as a single, accompanied by an appropriately eye-catching billboard advertising campaign, prompted a wave of fierce indignation.

The same people who had last year applauded the group for the

subversive sound and imagery of *Firestarter* — of course it would not encourage people to start fires — could now be found standing shoulder to shoulder with conservative academic Roger Scruton and a grouping of Labour MPs in deplored the unhealthy effect of such an irresponsible message.

But if ever a sense of perspective was truly lacking it was in the media's response to the Spice Girls, the group which rode the roller-coaster of British pop in 1997 from top to bottom and are now, whisper it, on the way back up again. It is easy to see why people would want the Spice Girls to fall. They have been over-zealously marketed (which may be why they got rid of their manager) and they are definitely not cool.

But the way in which their second album, *Spiceworld*, has

been written off as a commercial failure is pure fantasy. It has already sold 700,000 copies and will probably pass the million mark by the end of the year in Britain alone.

Their TV programme, *An Audience with the Spice Girls*, on December 1 attracted an audience of 11.8 million, about three times the average viewing figure for *Top of the Pops* and hardly the sort of response to an act for whom the bubble has supposedly burst.

With early reviews of their new movie, *Spiceworld*, which opens on Boxing Day, taking a surprisingly favourable tack, it looks as if the backlash to the Spice backlash is about to get underway. At the very least, it would be nice to think that the group's detractors might inject

a dose of reality into future reporting of their antics.

Perspective was also in short supply following the death of Diana, Princess of Wales. In the pop world, as elsewhere, her demise prompted a strange sort of euphoric hysteria, enabling Elton John's remake of *Candle in the Wind* to become the biggest-selling single ever.

But the various colossal successes of 1997 concealed something of an impasse in mainstream rock. Sales of albums by Supergrass, Paul Weller, Sleeper, and Black Grape (who have this week cancelled the remaining dates of their tour because of "nervous exhaustion") all fell short of expectations, as did Pulp's only single, *Help the Aged*. And apart from the Verve, an old band that suddenly found itself with the right album in the right

place at the right time, and the delightful R&B of All Saints, there was little new activity to get excited about.

Embrace may have spent the year being feted as the new Oasis, but on the evidence of their lacklustre efforts so far, this seems somewhat far-fetched. And while there have been spectacular gains in drum and bass thanks to Roni Size, and the big beat sounds of the Chemical Brothers, Propellerheads et al, dance is still another matter.

Strange too has been the peculiar dearth of major album releases toward the end of this year. Apart from Celine Dion's *Let's Talk About Love*, the Diana, Princess of Wales Tribute album and the usual *Best Of...* compilations, there has been virtually nothing to speak of since the end of October.

More depressingly, 1997 was bookended by two deaths. The

demise of Michael Hutchence in December took place in the full glare of the media spotlight at its most garish. In January, though, Billy MacKenzie, the former singer of the Associates, took his own life under quiet circumstances — in his father's garden shed. It sounds a terrible thing to say, but along with plane crashes and drink and drug overdoses, suicide has become a very rock'n'roll way to go, especially since the demise of Kurt Cobain and (probably) Rickey Edwards. But until the 1990s such tragedies had been few and far between: Nick Drake (1974), Ian Curtis (1980), Richard Manuel of the Band (1986), and that was about it. It is a chilling thought, but perhaps, as the highs of rock'n'roll get ever more frantically higher, the lows are also getting correspondingly lower.

Once lost, it is hard to restore a sense of perspective. The pop world has become like a junkie, hooked on its own hyperbole, demanding ever more extreme doses of instant success and failure, outrage and excess just to keep standing still.

Noel, Noel, Noel, Noel, and Damon

Look boys, it's Christmas — time to kiss under the mistletoe and call off the damaging Blur-Oasis wars

Time to gather round, pop-cherubs, for a Christmas fairytale. This is a story about how two warring pop stars — Noel and Damon — should finally lay down their knuckledusters and their fighting man's talk, find a suitable sprig of mistletoe, and make up for Christmas.

The truth is that Noel and Damon have much in common, and this is why the whole Blur/Oasis "war" started in the first place. From Oasis's inception they were constantly compared to Blur — both were indie bands who had been influenced by the Madchester "baggy" scene; were media-literate; had record collections that buckled the shelves with Beatles/Stones/Kinks/Who/Sex Pistols; and wanted to rule the world by the year 2000.

When their "war" started, it was instigated by Damon, who believed that by moving the release date of *Country House* in the same day as the release of *Roll With It*, he would roundly win the Oasis behinds and prove himself to be ruler of all pop. *Country*

Blur did beat *Roll With It* to the peak of the charts, which annoyed Noel, principally because he had a boyhood dream, as you do, of getting more No 1 hits than the Jam. Noel sulked, Damon was triumphal, and the nation, as one, said: "And that made *News At Ten* is ITV on moon-juce!"

However, Damon had badly miscalculated — Blur were at the crest of their fame, while Oasis were still ascending. By the end of the year, it was clear that Oasis had the throne in the Palace of Pop while Blur were uncomfortably perched on a foot-stool. Damon had risked everything and lost. Noel had forfeited the battle but won the war.

The results of this scrap have profoundly affected pop, and not entirely for the better. For Damon, it was a crushing, fist-clenching humiliation — like waking up the next morning having danced naked on a table the night before. He had staked his crown on literate, middle-class pop, beating working-class rock, and lost. He was forced to abandon his world-beating ambitions, and

return to stripped-down, left-field American/indie to consolidate a wavering fan-base. Happily, on the subsequent album, *Blur*, this has turned out to be an artistic triumph.

The truth is that Noel probably aspires to being Damon; and that Damon is jealous of Noel. Damon is a literate, middle-class bohemian, and Noel's big hero is John Lennon — a working-class rocker who became a middle-class, literate, bohemian. Damon would love to connect with the masses and lose himself in euphoria, rather than constantly over-analyse everything he does — as Noel is able to. It's rather ironic that Oasis's most successful song to date is *Wonderwall*, the key lyric from which is: "There are many things that I would like to say to you / But I don't know how" — mourning Noel's lack of vocal; while Damon, who has too many words, chucked them all in the bin for Blur's most successful song, *Song 2*, which consists entirely of Damon mindlessly and joyfully yelling "Who-ho! Well I feel heavy-metal".

Frankly, Damon and Noel have too much in common, and too many things to learn from each other, to remain enemies. I rather suspect that one day, not in the too distant future, they will both gather in an empty bar, and talk until the sun rises. They'll never be pals, and they will both threaten to kill the other if either ever mentions it, but forever afterwards, when they are slapping each other off in idle moments, they will both have a twinkle in their eye.

And hopefully Damon will tip Noel the wink that no guitar solo should ever last more than 12 seconds — which is the greatest present Britain could ask for in 1998.

LIVE GIG
Steve Weller, the man in charge, presented himself as part of the band, a lean but muscular four-piece featuring Steve White on drums, Yolanda Charles on bass and Matt Deighton on guitar, with Weller taking most of the guitar solos himself. From *Porcelain Gods* onwards they were joined by a three-piece string section, which contributed oc-

a ship to sail in stormy weather. I don't need you to ruffle the feathers of my peacock suit."

Although very much the man in charge, Weller presented himself as part of the band, a lean but muscular four-piece featuring Steve White on drums, Yolanda Charles on bass and Matt Deighton on guitar, with Weller taking most of the guitar solos himself. From *Porcelain Gods* onwards they were joined by a three-piece string section, which contributed oc-

casional dashes of colour to various songs, notably *Up In Suze's Room*, which came during a more relaxed acoustic section in the middle of the set.

There was no fuss or frivolity as they cantered into the home straight with *Sunflower*, *Mermaid* and *Into Tomorrow*, a tremendous volley of hits that confirmed Weller as one of the best mainstream rock songwriters Britain has ever produced and a dished performer who, loud or quiet, always means business.

What you hear is what you get

WHEN you think how his contemporaries from the late 1970s have turned out — Elvis Costello, Joe Jackson, the Stranglers, Siouxsie — you would have to say that Paul Weller has kept himself well up to the mark. David Sinclair writes: "At 39 he looks in good shape and, having produced some of his best work since the Jam in the 1980s he is still respected as an honorary member of the current generation of Britpop stars. However, on the first of two nights at this temporary struc-

ture housing an audience of 6,000 on wasteland next to the long-defunct Battersea Power Station, he was not a happy man. Like other acts to have played there this month, Weller had been forced to turn the volume down. "You can thank the bloody council for us having to play this quiet," he said after opening the set with his bristly, witty versions of *The Changingman* and *Friday Street*.

In truth, the sound was great, making up in clarity what it may have lacked in

presence, and allowing the rich detail of Weller's songs to shine through. Weller, for his part, seemed content to vent his anger on the next number, *Peacock Suit*, which he ripped into with venomous relish, his growl, soulful voice picking off the words like ducks in a shooting gallery. "I don't need

Speed garage low on fuel

POP ALBUMS

VARIOUS ARTISTS

Dream Team in Session Volume 2

(4 Liberty/Deconstruction 74321 549032)

SPEED garage is the improbable label for the dance trend currently sweeping the nation's clubs, and the Dream Team production/DJ collective comprising Timmi Magic, DJ Spooky, Mike B and Unig is the hottest name on the scene.

The sound is basically a mixture of house and swingbeat, a lollipop rhythm that introduces a sensual dynamic into the otherwise monotonously pneumatic beat that has dominated dancefloors for the past decade or so.

Dream Team In Session Volume 2 stitches together remixes of tracks by artists including Damage, Anthill Mob, Double 99 and New Horizon into a typically anonymous soundtrack.

Unlike drum and bass or the big beat sound of the Chemical Brothers, there is no serious attempt at musical innovation, and if this is as radical as it gets then I suspect speed garage will have died a quick and painless death because most people have had occasion to discover what exactly it is.

But, along with the populist touch, he has maintained the classic bar-band singer's knack of sounding more like other people than he does



The Dream Team collective — hot now but for how long?

DELBERT MCCLINTON

One of the Fortunate Few

(Curb/Rising Tide RTD 53042)

THE Nashville-based Texan Delbert McClinton has been on the road for the best part of 40 years — from the roadhouse circuit of the 1960s to President Clinton's inauguration ball in the 1990s — and if anybody knows how to win over an audience, he does. His easy-going blend of country, blues and rock'n'roll is always good company and invariably pleasant on the ear.

As a result, although they are nicely performed, the songs on this album lack an original mark of authority.

DAVID SINCLAIR

himself. It is a trait which tends to mar the tracks on *One of the Fortunate Few*, which features a host of guests including Vince Gill, John Prine and the ubiquitous B.B. King.

Old Weakness is thus a dead ringer for the Rolling Stones' *Honky Tonk Women*, *Sending Me Angels* sounds like the Band. *Too Much Stuff* bears more than a passing resemblance to Chuck Berry's *Too Much Monkey Business* and so on.

As a result, although they are nicely performed, the songs on this album lack an original mark of authority.

JIM HALL

Panorama (Telarc CD 83408)

WHEN Sonny Rollins formed a pianoless band for his 1962 comeback album *The Bridge*, one of its members was the guitarist Jim Hall. And what was Rollins's reason for approaching Hall? His "incredible harmonic sense" and sensitivity.

Thirty-five years later, Hall's quiet, understated mastery, both as subtle accompanist and thoughtful soloist, has been recognised by the award to him of Denmark's Jazzprisen — and this album contains nine good reasons why. Recorded live at the Village Vanguard, and featuring Hall with bassist Scott Colley and drummer Terry Clarke alongside a series of guests (pianists Geoff Keezer and Kenny Barron, alto player Greg Osby, flugelhorn player Art Farmer, trombonist Slide Hampton), it showcases a neat, elegant, unostentatious, versatile player meshing as faultlessly with his stellar partners as he did with Rollins all those years ago.

CHRIS PARKER

JAZZ ALBUMS

lads, pop tunes, joyfully rumbustious romps, artful pastiches, *Sibelius*... all are grist to the trio's mill, but whether alone or when joined by the violins of Jaakko and Pekka Kuusisto, they somehow manage to produce utterly distinctive and genuinely humorous but consistently adroit jazz.

Ragtime, tango, lush bal-

TOP TEN ALBUMS

1 (1)	Let's Talk About Love	.....	Celine Dion (Epic)
2 (2)	Spiceworld	.....	Spice Girls (Virgin)
3 (3)	Urban Hymns	.....	Verve (Hut)
4 (4)	The Best of...	.....	Wham! (Epic)
5 (5)	All Sailors	.....	All Saints (London)
6 (6)	Like You Do	.....	Lightning Seeds (Epic)
7 (7)	White on Blonde	.....	Texas (Mercury)
8 (8)	Paint the Sky with Stars	.....	Enya (MCA)
9 (9)	Greatest Hits	Elton John (EMI)
10 (11)	Lennon Legend	John Lennon (Parlophone)

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Figure in brackets denotes last week's position

LONDON
CHORAL WONDERS: A weekend of song to remember. Peter Hall's *Vox* of long ago, Jonathan Brown conducting *Hansel & Gretel* in music for Advent and Christmas from the 14th and 15th centuries. This is followed by Stephen Layton conducting his splendid vocal ensemble, the Polyphony, in instrumental, vocal and choral pieces in two concerts. Hall ends the Month's termours, and a performance of *Coral's* Christmas Concerto and Bach's *Christmas Oratorio* on Sunday. With soloists Catherine Bay and Catherine Wyn-Rogers. St. John's, Smith Square, SW1 (0171-222 1089). Tues-Sun 7.30pm.

ELTON JOHN: The enduring power and magnetism of the unconventional singer-tourist ends his national tour here this weekend. Accompanied by a full band, he performs his greatest album *Tiny Dancer*, plus a host of greatest hits. Wembley Arena, Wembley, Middlesex (0181 900 1234). Tonight and tomorrow 8pm.

MASTER MAHLER: James Levine, maestro of New York City's much the most acclaimed Orchestra and Chorus with a cast of internationally acclaimed soloists in Mahler's monumental Symphony No 8, the "Symphony of a Thousand". The conductor is Daniel Barenboim. Huddersfield Hall, Huddersfield, West Yorkshire (01484 83123). Sunday 7.30pm.

SONG RECITAL: Long-standing colleagues Felicity Lott, Ann Murray and Christopher Maltman sing a host of songs and duets by Schubert, Brahms, Faure, Mandelshtam, Schumann and Kurt Weill. They are joined by the tenor Richard Johnson in a performance of Mozart's *duet* and two from *Don Juan*. Wigmore Hall, Wigmore Street, W1 (0171 635 2141). Tonight, 7.30pm.

WEEKEND CHOICE

A daily guide to arts and entertainment compiled by Marti Hargreave

ELSEWHERE

BLACKPOOL: The Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra is joined by the RTÉ National Children's Choir and Youth Choir for an evening of British traditional carols and Christmas music with seasonal readings from the works of Dickens and Laurence Lessing. Walton and Vaughan Williams are the programme invited for the early evening Grand Theatre, Church Street, (01253 293 21). Sunday, 7.30pm.

KING'S LYNN: Two performances here for American director Francesco Zeffirelli's new production of a new production for the Royal Opera of Britain's first music-theatre work, *Paul Bunyan*. Richard Hadock conducts a cast led by Thomas Randle and Peter Collier-Wright. Royal Opera House, Tuesday Market Place (01533 764884). Tonight and tomorrow, 7.30pm.

MIDTOWN: Brian Blessed puts his comic talents to use as he gets to grips with the role of Hook in *Makem Goodid*. A J.M. Barrie play, Peter Pan Children's television presenter Karen O'Brien plays the boy who won't grow up. Royal Exchange Theatre, 1921 Oldham Road (0161 248 8111). Opens today, 3pm and 7pm. Tomorrow, 3pm, 7pm, Sun, 1pm. Mon-Sat, 2pm, 7pm. Tues-Tue, Sun various times. No part Dec 25.

WINES FROM



A glass of cool, delicious Freixenet turns any occasion into a sparkling experience. Whether you're relaxing at home, dropping in for dinner, or just getting together with friends, you know you deserve to celebrate...

...so why wait until Christmas Day?

The image features the Freixenet logo in its signature script font, with the word "Freixenet" in white script on a dark background. To the right of the logo, the slogan "MAKES IT HAPPEN" is written in large, bold, white capital letters. Below the slogan, there is smaller, illegible text.

Giles Tremlett looks at the strengths of Spain's new leaders as the ghosts of 40 years of Franco's dictatorship are being laid to rest

Aznar's conservatives move leftwards

Under José María Aznar, the conservative Prime Minister, Spain is living through a period of political novelty. Before his Popular Party's election victory in March last year most Spaniards had no experience of life under a democratic right-wing Government.

Bitter memories of nearly 40 years of dictatorship under General Franco had caused Spaniards to shun the Right after democracy was re-established when the *caudillo* died in 1975. Señor Aznar's election win finally broke the taboo.

One of his main challenges, then, has been to chase away the ghosts of the past and prove that there is no reason to be afraid of his right-wing Government. The Prime Minister has taken great pains to do this. He has moved his party towards the centre and has strenuously avoided confrontation with two of his potentially most powerful adversaries, the trade unions and regionalist parties.

In the latter case he has little choice. His victory was not as resounding as the polls had predicted. The Popular Party fell short of winning an absolute majority and had to form a minority Government supported by regionalist parties from Catalonia, the Basque country and the Canary Islands.

This left Señor Aznar's Government hostage to the Catalan regional Prime Minister, Jordi Pujol. A withdrawal of support by Señor Pujol's regionalist Convergence i Unió Party would immediately force fresh elections.

The alliance between Señor Aznar, Señor Pujol and the other regionalist parties is, in many ways, unnatural. Where the Popular Party is naturally centralist, the regionalist parties want power devolved to Spain's 17 autonomous

POLITICS

regional governments. This is especially the case with the Catalans and the Basque National Party. Señor Aznar has had to take a crash course in the political and cultural desires of his new allies. He has satisfied demands for decentralisation by speeding up the transfer of powers to regional governments. This, for example, has seen the Basques gain increased power over tax rates, while the Catalans have won a financing deal.

The Prime Minister has found



Socialist leader Alfonso Guerra

plenty of common ground with his allies on the economic front. This has been especially so with Señor Pujol's party, which represents Catalonia's industrial middle classes, puts the economy ahead of regionalist demands.

A common desire to join the European single currency has provided the basic cement for Señor Aznar's alliance with the regionalists. Spain's booming economy, now growing at 3 per cent, and the

Government's liberal approach to it have added further glue.

But tensions remain. The Basques, for example, do not see eye to eye with Javier Mayor Oreja, the Interior Minister, and dislike his policy towards armed separatist group Eta, which continues to carry out up to a dozen assassinations each year. They want dialogue and a softening of the prisons policy, which sends Eta activists to jails outside the Basque country.

Señor Mayor Oreja has ruled out talks with Eta's political ally, the Herri Batasuna Party, until the violence stops. Eta has responded by targeting Popular Party members. Its June kidnapping and murder of Miguel Ángel Blanco, a young Popular Party councillor from the Basque town of Ermua, brought millions out in protest. It also brought promises of a tougher line on Eta. Señor Mayor Oreja's calm, firm handling of the situation has won him widespread support and made him Señor Aznar's most popular minister.

Relations with the Convención Party are relatively stable, and Señor Pujol's support looks set to hold up through 1998. But here, too, there are occasional flare-ups. The most recent arose over teaching the humanities in schools.

The proposal by education minister Esperanza Aguirre that schools should teach "the unitary nature" of Spanish history and geography caused outrage in Señor Pujol's regional government, which sees little historical unity between Spain and Catalonia.

The much-heralded clash with the trade unions has failed to take place, partly because the Prime Minister has renounced many of the labour and social security reforms that his advisers say are urgent. It is also because unions



Ploughing ahead: although he leads a minority Government, José María Aznar's policies and diplomacy are paying dividends

preferred to reach an agreement with employers allowing for a degree of liberalisation of the labour market rather than confront the Government while it pursued the popular goal of qualifying for monetary union.

Señor Aznar's relatively gentle first 18 months in office have been helped by upheavals in the main opposition party, the Spanish Socialist Workers Party. Under the charismatic leadership of Felipe

González, the Socialists had held González, the Socialists had held

for 13 years until 1996. Señor González was eventually brought down by security and corruption scandals, which are only just beginning to be processed through the sluggish court system.

In

the first big case to reach a conclusion, six former members of the party's finance team were jailed for illegal fund-raising.

The Socialists, who have a new leader in Joaquín Almunia, are still on the defensive. They will remain so while the courts investigate further corruption cases and the role Señor González's Government played in a dirty undercover war against Eta suspects in which 28 people died.

Despite the apparent successes of his first few months in government, many Spaniards still do not warm to Señor Aznar, who rarely beats Señor González in polls on personal popularity. This has much to do

with the grey, introverted image of this 44-year-old former tax inspector, which contrasts strongly with his predecessor's charisma.

The Left not only did not believe Señor Aznar would become Prime Minister, it also refused to believe that, if he did manage to get elected, he would be a success. Yet his Popular Party continues to lead the polls.

Spain, it seems, has laid to rest the ghosts of the Right.

TOURISM

The impact of the euro on Spain's largest industry — tourism — is certain to be considerable. Edward Owen writes. The minister responsible for the sector, José Manuel Fernández Norniella, is vigorously engaged in trying to brace businesses and government officials in readiness for its introduction.

Since Spain cannot maintain the benefits of favourable exchange rates, it will have to be more competitive, with the emphasis on quality and value for money. From 1999, many EU tourists, getting used to the euro in their own countries, will for the first time know exactly how much anything costs in Spain without having to resort to a pocket calculator.

Tourism, which accounts for 10.4 per cent of gross domestic product, continues to break all records, but the new regime responsible for national policy is far from complacent. The Treasury has earmarked £4.6 million to tell the industry what the euro is all about. But tourist businesses are seeking more money to offset the additional costs they anticipate of launching the euro, including loss of foreign exchange commissions.

Señor Fernández Norniella, 52, Secretary of State for Commerce, Tourism and Smaller Businesses, has also established various bodies to coordinate tourism policies after their devolution to the regions by the previous Socialist administration. He has reversed the latter's policy to sell part of the state-run Parador hotel chain. This year tourism is expected to bring £15 billion to Spain. Last year, the country received 62 million foreign visitors, of whom 41.4 million stayed overnight and are



Fernández Norniella, inset, and Ronda, which has a new Parador on top of the gorge

£44m Parador boost for new visitor boom

therefore categorised as tourists. Nearly 60 per cent of tourists come on package holidays.

"The important difference between our policy and that of the previous Government is that we are maximising collaboration and communication between Madrid and tourist sectors at all regional levels," says Señor Fernández Norniella. "At a Madrid congress of all regions and tourist enterprises we adopted 23 concrete conclusions which will be acted upon."

One concerns the impact on tourism of the euro in 1999. Visitors who drive will be pleased to know that

standard signposting is planned across the country. This should eliminate the need for knowing the often incomprehensible Basque names for destinations in northern Spain or realising that a sign in Galician saying "A Coruña" literally means "the Coruña" rather than "To Coruña".

Tourist chiefs also want to remedy one of the most frequent complaints about Spanish tourist offices: that they hardly ever carry literature on regions other than their own. One of the worst offenders is the tourist counter at Madrid's airport and the city's bureaux.

Hopefully, officials will also have beaten all records, and the trend is the same for next year," he says. "They are unique to Spain. There is no other country that can offer a hotel chain with such a combination of artistic and cultural heritage. Paradors are a good way of preserving our rich inheritance and they attract a special type of tourism, often bringing business to rural areas." Next year discounts will be offered on various routes linking the Parador network.

WINE

Export demand for Spanish wines has risen since overall quality has dramatically improved. Edward Owen writes. Spain has finally produced a good argument against EU bureaucrats who have ordered the country to rip up vines from 1,300 square miles, an area larger than Luxembourg.

Spain has more land dedicated to the grape than any other country in the world, but is the third-ranked wine-producer, behind Italy and France. In the past six years the value of wine exports from Spain have increased by nearly 60 per cent and last year were worth £600 million, with Britain a major customer.

Jesús Flores, president of the Spanish Association of Sommeliers, says there has been a revolution in Spanish wine-making. Spanish oenologists are following consumer demand. Tintos [red wines] are more corpulent, more suave, with less tannin and more of a fruity flavour. "Great wines are designed on the vine and new clones of grapes are being grafted in Spain. But the great strength of Spanish wine is still the relation between price and quality."

He says that tintos now have more body. "We are looking for more colour and the fruity character is more important, as is the appropriate choice of wood for ageing in barrels. More importance is now attached to fermentation of whites in the barrel and self-fermenting yeasts. The process is more sophisticated."

Of cavas, Spain's méthode champenoise sparkling wines, the best of which taste as good as champagnes but are cheaper. Señor Flores,



Jesús Flores: "The strength of Spanish wine is the relation between price and quality"

Tasty sales figures as quality rises

comments: "The major brands have set aside their war with each other and are consolidating their covets into sparkling wines of real quality."

Almost all cavas are produced in Catalonia, northeast Spain, mainly from local Parellada, Macabeo and Xarello grapes. The two biggest producers are Codorniu and Freixenet. The latter exports the most.

Manuel Duran, vice-president of Freixenet, says he exported 55 million bottles in the first nine months of this year, a six million increase on the same period last year. Britons uncorked nearly five

million bottles of the fizz.

Señor Duran approves of Britons and Germans drinking his cava all year round, complaining that Spaniards really seem to drink it only at Christmas.

José Ferrer, 72, president of the family-owned Freixenet, has just announced a £21 million expansion plan for his company, which had a turnover of £187.5 million last year. The economic climate was good for expansion. He says: "Profits are greater. Consumption has moderately increased in the domestic market and exports have been extraordinary. Interest rates have dropped, as have

the costs of raw materials."

The bodega, located in the cava capital of Sant Sadurní, 40 miles south of Barcelona, was founded in 1889 and first produced cava in 1915. The huge cellars go down seven storeys and contain 100 million bottles.

Señor Flores, who is also

a director of Spain's largest wine club, Vino Selección, which has 33,000 members, recommends the following for those who want a Spanish flavour at Christmas. As an aperitivo, he suggests a chilled Tio Pepe fino sherry, Freixenet's Brut Nature or Codorniu's Anna de Codorniu. For a red, he chooses an elegant Pesquera Crianza 1994 from the Ribera del Duero region made from Tempranillo grapes.

His preferred white comes from neighbouring Rueda, a "fresh, dry" Sanz 1996 made from 100 per cent Verdejo. To accompany coffee he goes for Lepanto brandy from Jerez — "non-aggressive and silky".



White towns, black economy: some of the world's finest leather designer-label goods are made in the hills of Andalucía

Nestling in a fold of the mountains of Grazalema National Park in central Andalucía lies the whitewashed town of Ubrique, where a semi-clandestine industry provides for the world's discerning rich.

Visitors venturing off the new bypass might notice more than the usual number of shops selling leather goods. But few would realise that this unassuming town annually manufactures and mostly exports about £50 million worth of the finest leather bags, luggage and fashion accessories. These are made to order by, and embossed in the name of, the world's top fashion houses.

Ubrique produces a quarter of Spain's leather products and consumes so many top-quality hides that 80 per cent have to be imported. So why the secrecy? And why has the local town hall built a new bullring rather than a centre to promote its fine craft?

The answer lies in the acute rivalry among manufacturers and the widespread use of unofficial labour. Without doubt, Ubrique is a major statistic in Spain's submerged economy. But it is also becoming respectable.

We have a population of 18,300 and officially there are only 1,500 working in the industry. But really there are between 5,000 and 6,000 in it — someone in every home," admits Ubrique's mayor, Juan Ignacio Calvo, a 43-year-old maths teacher. He is embarrassed that the town's name is often omitted from the designer labels on its fine leather work, but that is the price — for cheap but highly skilled labour — it has to pay. "It's a type of licence from Loewe or Christian Dior or Gucci, which we respect," he says. But he believes it is now time for local designers to promote Ubrique in its own right.

The origins of the centuries-old business came from the livestock that grazed on the rich grass of the mountains — Grazalema has Spain's highest rainfall — and the lack of crags which can damage hides. The first artisans fashioned the fine leather into petates, tobacco cases and pouches for smugglers and bandits. A folding case made for farmers' livestock documents is

arguably the forerunner of the wallet.

Soon the fame of the fine, strong sewing of Ubrique's leather spread and demand increased. Until recently the town was infamous for selling copies of designer handbags for a fraction of their actual prices in the Rue du Faubourg Saint-Honoré or Bond Street. But now the famous fashion houses themselves contract Ubrique's skills. And the wealth obtained from piracy has bought respectability. Well-educated offspring have taken on family factories and invested in state-of-the-art machines.

Victoria Coronil is the young, engaging boss of MCM, which makes bags mainly for Christian Dior. Her grandfather sold his leather goods from a tray at the 1929 World's Fair in nearby Seville. He progressed to exporting crocodile wallets to America, boxes for gambling games and blotters for

the military. Her father established contracts with Christian Dior, Dunhill and Paco Rabanne in the early 1980s.

Now MCM's production is divided between London, Paris and Hong Kong. "Everyone here learns how to work with leather from their childhood," explains Señora Coronil, who fits between Tokyo, Hong Kong, Paris and Germany. "Our turnover has trebled in the past four years."

As a child, Ana Camargo started making small cloth clothes from bits of leather left over in her father's factory. Now, as Mamo & Camargo, she sells the softest of leather clothes and chic bags around the world. "We should not just love the prestige of famous fashion houses but should push Ubrique as 'Made in Spain' as well," she enthuses.

An evening stroll in the maze of Ubrique's steep, narrow, cobbled streets, where bougainvillea, jasmines, geraniums and tomatoes

grow, reveals the real extent of the industry. Follow the tapping noises and one finds families gathered around tables at home making bits of wallets and handbags on marble slabs. The air is sickly with glue.

In a tiny workshop, Cristóbal, Francisco and Pepe, all in their thirties, expertly fold and glue dyed leather strips to be factory-sewn into wallets. "I can earn £20 pounds a month. We work for different companies," he says, dabbing his fingers into more glue, which he calls, with the lisping Andaluz accent, "chiper".

Antonio León is general secretary of the manufacturers' association representing 300 entities. "The Far East and India will never match our handwork," he says. "Now more and more fashion houses, such as Nina Ricci, are embossing 'Made in Spain', but 56 per cent of our exports are resold from France."

The new bullring? Ubrique is not shy about its other "industry", a bullfighter called Jesulín de Ubrique, who has achieved superstar status. He can afford to buy a handbag that sells for £1,000 in Paris but can cost ten times the price in Ubrique, where it is made.

Hide and chic is the name of the game

Edward Owen discovers why one does not usually see the word 'Ubrique' embossed on designer leather goods

EXPORTS

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EDUCATION



David Blunkett with guide dog Lucy and young carollers from St Matthew's Church of England Primary School in Westminster

Joyful and triumphant

What makes a good school carol service? The end of this, the longest term, is greeted with glee by grey-faced staff — so is one ingredient the palpable feeling of relief from the stalls?

Staff, parents and pupils wait with differing emotions in the silence which precedes the first verse of *Once In Royal David's City*. Is it going to come this year from a wunderkind with a recording contract underneath his turban, or a press-ganged and nervous heavy breather?

If you ask a retired head teacher what they miss most about their school, they are quite likely to say "chapel" or "assembly". If you ask a pupil what is the most tedious part of school life, they will probably volunteer the same answer. The chorister caught reading *Private Eye* during a long service at Wells Cathedral may have lost his liveli-

Pupils may grumble but the school carol service is a fine tradition, says Anne Lee

hood for his sins, but he will have the sympathy of every choirboy in the country.

For choristers too young to appreciate *Private Eye*, the current favourite activity is making models out of Blu-Tack, which sometimes bear a remarkable resemblance to members of staff.

Carol services reveal the hidden agendas in a school more clearly than any other "state occasion". It is possible to discover who's who by scanning the order of service to see who is reading the lesson and when. Do past pupils take part? Are school governors included and do they attend? How many pupils read and take part? How traditional is the service and does the head or the chairman of governors read

that final, mystical lesson from John? One of the kindest gestures I have seen was when a member of the administrative staff was asked to read a lesson. Often they are the unsung heroes of a school.

At their best, schools are communities which act like large families. The carol service is their Christmas meal. Some schools go to great trouble to include the wider community. Malvern College invites "the town" to its service, and Queenswood School welcomes handicapped people involved in its community service programme.

The choice of music is telling. Some schools never dare risk the wrath of their establishment by departing from the full nine lessons and carols. Others proceed at a

pace and have managed the whole affair within half an hour.

Many music masters seize the opportunity to demonstrate their pupils' prowess to a captive audience, the entire school orchestra arrives and the service becomes more like an annual concert.

One of the most moving events I attended was an international carol service at which music from places as far apart as Africa and Poland marked the climax of a year when many cultures had been celebrated. This appropriately and symbolically marked the end of some international bullying in the sixth form.

Are the prayers real or of the "moving lips" variety? Some carol services are now so multi-faith that they are barely Christian, but they are still about hope and joy and community. They mark a time for forgiveness — and even though pupils moan, they recognise the value of the ceremony.

Margaret Tulloch questions Government priorities

Parent power, or just a Bill full of hot air?

Governments must find parents a mixed blessing. The previous Government often claimed that its education policies were made on behalf of parents, but this wrapping up in the parental banner became less noticeable as it became clear that many parents wanted not only greater accountability and information but smaller classes, roofs repaired and to keep their schools within the Local Education Authority network.

David Blunkett, the Secretary of State for Education and Employment, is rightly proud that 3,500 parents responded to his consultation leaflets in supermarkets last summer. He was heartened that their priorities matched those of the Government: smaller class sizes, rising standards of numeracy and literacy and stronger links between schools and parents.

When his School Standards and Framework Bill was published, he said it would give parents a "stronger role in their children's education". Home-school contracts would define parents' duties and responsibilities and those of the school; parents would have more places on school governing bodies and a greater say on local education committees.

Just before the Bill was published, the Department for Education and Employment hosted a conference to launch an Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development report on "parents as partners in schooling". This research provides a thorough analysis of parental involvement in nine OECD countries and puts the proposed legislation in context.

The OECD report said: "Governments should not always assume that parents want what they want. A parental agenda needs to be identified by a very broad consultation". The supermarket leaflets did not ask specifically for views on the Government's White

Paper proposals. No doubt during the passage of the Bill, which gets its second reading on Monday, a more detailed analysis will emerge of what these 3,500 parents said in their responses.

The OECD also said: "In deciding whether to involve parents more closely, it is important for policy-makers to clarify ... why they want to put a policy in place." The Education Bill shows signs that the Government has not asked itself this. If it has, it has come up with some very cynical reasons.

Many of us interested in the role of parents in education draw a distinction between the need to involve every parent in helping their child to learn, and involving

'It seems strange that parents cannot be trusted to do the best for their child without a contract'

parents in policy-making and governance. The OECD researched both aspects and found successful examples of each.

If the Bill becomes law, every governing body will be required to ask parents to sign a home-school "agreement" to "ensure" the partnership. Thus will a principle be established in schools that responsible participation is only expected if all the participants have signed to say they will be responsible. This is a very dangerous example to put before young people. Governing bodies will be required to "consult" parents about the agreement. Without the class meetings and parent councils in schools which the OECD report found in

many countries, how can parents set out their agenda for inclusion in the "agreement"?

The claim that the provision of more parent governors on governing bodies and on LEAs will give parents a greater say also needs closer examination. Unless parent governors have a structure which enables them to consult parents within the schools and similarly within the LEA, these proposals look like tokenism. Parent governors find it difficult to reach their constituency, many parents do not know their parent governors. Parents tend to identify most with their child's class or tutor group.

However, when it comes to

deciding selective entry to grammar schools and deciding which of several types the school should be, the Bill requires parents to make the ultimate decision by ballot. It seems strange that parents cannot be trusted to do the best for their child without a contract, but can be trusted to decide about school structures which might affect many generations to come.

The parliamentary process should allow for changes to the Bill to be discussed and agreed. So what can be hoped for? Governing bodies could be required to have a home-school policy without insisting on signed contracts. Similarly, if parent governors were entitled to consult parent councils drawn from termly class meetings, as in Norway, a genuine voice for parents could be established. Both locally and nationally, a structure built on the right of parents to elect parent governors would give parents similar rights to be heard at national level as in many other countries.

Perhaps it all depends on whether the Government really wants to hear from parents, or only wants them to make decisions which it would rather avoid.

• The author is executive secretary of the Campaign for State Education.

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DEPT OF FINANCIAL SERVICES

South Kensington LONDON

Law Report December 19 1997 Queen's Bench Divisional Court

Home Secretary entitled to fix whole life tariff for mandatory lifer

Regina v Secretary of State for the Home Department, Ex parte Hindley

Before Lord Bingham of Cornhill, Lord Chief Justice, Mr Justice Hooper and Mr Justice Aspin [Judgment December 18]

The Home Secretary, in exercising his broad discretion confirmed by section 29 of the Crime (Sentences) Act 1997, was entitled to fix a whole life tariff to be served by a mandatory life sentence prisoner as the period necessary to satisfy the requirements of retribution and deterrence.

Where he had considered that a provisional tariff of 30 years might be appropriate, his successors did not act unlawfully in increasing that period to a whole life tariff where the provisional term had not been fixed or communicated to the prisoner.

However, the policy of the former Home Secretary, which confined review of a whole life tariff to the sole purpose of considering its conversion to a determinate period and only to considerations of retribution and deterrence, was unlawful as constituting a fetter on his discretion.

By contrast the policy of the present Home Secretary, by which other issues such as a prisoner's exceptional progress in custody might be considered, was unobjectionable.

The Queen's Bench Divisional Court so held dismissing an application by Myra Hindley for judicial review of:

1 The decisions of the Home Secretary communicated on February 3, 1997 that she serve a whole life tariff to satisfy the requirements of retribution and deterrence in respect of the two offences of murder of which she had been convicted, and on November 19, 1997 that the tariff be maintained;

2 The policy of the Home Secretary, Mr Michael Howard, announced on December 7, 1994, that those on whom whole life tariffs had been imposed would not thereafter be able to gain release by reason of their progress in

prison and lack of danger to society, and

3 The policy of the Home Secretary, Mr Jack Straw, announced on November 19, 1997, to maintain a category of whole life prisoners in respect of whom their length of time in custody, progress in prison and lack of dangerousness would never qualify them for more than the possibility of release before death as an exception to a predetermined general rule of life-long incarceration.

In 1966 the applicant had been convicted of the murder of two children, Lesley Ann Downey and Edward Evans, and of being an accessory after the fact to the murder of a third, John Kilbride. She also gave details of Brady's domination over her and the intimidation to which he had subjected her.

In 1990 the Home Secretary concluded that careful study of her case in the context of similar cases led inexorably to the imposition of a whole life tariff.

In 1993 the Home Secretary announced his response to R v Secretary of State for the Home Department, Ex parte Doodly [1994] 1 AC 531, and in particular that a prisoner would be told his tariff, the judicial recommendations and any reasons for departing from them. He stated that exceptionally a tariff might be increased or reduced, but that a prisoner might make representations against any such increase.

On December 7, 1994 the Home Secretary announced his policy in relation to prisoners serving a whole life tariff: that there would be periodic ministerial reviews of such a case after 25 years in custody to consider whether to convert the tariff to a determinate period. Such reviews would be confined solely to considerations of retribution and deterrence.

His Lordship could see no reason in principle why a crime or crime if sufficiently serious, should not be regarded as deserving lifelong incarceration for purposes of punishment.

One could readily accept that in requiring a sentence of life imprisonment on those convicted of murder, Parliament did not intend the sentence to mean what it said in all, or even a majority, of cases. But there was nothing to suggest that Parliament intended that it should never, even leaving aside considerations of risk, mean what it said.

When, in section 29 of the Crime (Sentences) Act 1997, Parliament again conferred a wide discretion on the Home Secretary to release mandatory life sentence prisoners it did so in the knowledge that some such prisoners were subject to whole life tariffs. Successive Lord Chief Justices had regarded such a tariff as lawful, and so did his Lordship.

At that time the Parole Board decided not to review the ap-

plicant's case for a further five years, nor Brady's for a further ten years. At that stage the applicant was not told and could not have calculated the provisional 30 year tariff.

In 1987 the applicant confessed to the police her complicity in the murders of two other children, Keith Bennett and Pauline Reade, and in that of John Kilbride. She also gave details of Brady's domination over her and the intimidation to which he had subjected her.

Mr Edward Fitzgerald, QC and Mr Tim Owen for the applicant; Mr David Pannick, QC and Mr Mark Shaw for the Home Secretary.

THE LORD CHIEF JUSTICE submitted that it was unlawful for a whole life tariff to be set in any case, as being inconsistent with the intentions and expectations of those who had enacted the abolition of the death penalty in 1965, with the practice adopted in the years following abolition and with the parole procedures introduced in 1967.

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practice of his predecessor in setting and reviewing adult murderers' tariffs.

On his discretion to alter a tariff he stated that when reviewing at the 25-year point he would be open to the possibility that exceptional circumstances, such as exceptional progress in prison, might render a reduction appropriate.

On November 19, he invited representations from the applicant on the possibility of reduction, but indicated that, applying his policy, he saw no reason to depart from the whole life tariff.

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sentencing function he had acted unlawfully in effectively increasing the prisoner's tariff in that case.

However, Mr Pannick submitted in the present case that both Lord Stern and Lord Hope had founded their statements of principle on the condition that the tariff had there been fixed and communicated to the prisoner.

A Home Secretary could not fix his successors, so even if he fixed a whole life tariff in a particular case and decided never to look at it again he could not prevent his successors from doing so. But more importantly he could not unlawfully fetter his own discretion.

Section 61 of the Criminal Justice Act 1967, section 35 of the Criminal Justice Act 1991 and section 29 of the 1997 Act conferred a very broad discretion on him. He was free to formulate and follow a policy and for administrative reasons it was necessary for him to do so. But he must not adopt a policy which admitted of no exceptions whatever the facts of the case.

Following the House of Lords' approach stated in *In re Finlay* [1985] AC 318, 336, His Lordship had, unlawfully fettered his discretion since he expressly said that the purpose of periodical reviews would be solely to consider whether the whole life tariff should be converted to a determinate period and should be confined to considerations of retribution and deterrence.

By that he was to be taken to have meant that no consideration would be given to factors such as exceptional progress in prison. The applicant's challenge to that statement of policy was made good.

However Mr Straws' policy statement of November 10, 1997 remedied that defect and accordingly the policy now in force was legally unobjectionable on that ground.

On the question of the lawfulness of increasing the applicant's tariff his Lordship referred to Person where Lord Stern and Lord Hope of Craigmyle had both held, adversely to the Home Secretary, that since he was exercising his power to increase a tariff once set and had made it plain that he would not increase a tariff once a formal review had been given. He could not have supposed it necessary to reserve a right to reduce a tariff.

The evidence showed that the provisional fixing of a tariff was an exceptional step. The natural inference was that it was set at 30 years because the Home Secretary recognised that it might be judged appropriate to imprison the applicant for a longer period.

He reached a provisional conclusion of 30 years because he wished to reserve the right for himself to revise that term, whether upwards or downwards. The tariff was not fixed or set at that time. Nor was it ever communicated to the applicant.

All the official communications and statements now before the court were careful to avoid giving any indication of how long she should expect to remain in prison. In 1989 she wrote to the Home Secretary pleading to be told her tariff date. She was not told.

In the light of *Doodly* it was plain that she should have been told of any decision on her tariff term, of any departure from the judicial recommendations and the reasons for it.

It was hard on her that she should be prejudiced by the Home Secretary's failure to do what the law now said he should have done. But it was difficult to see how the applicant could be in greater hardship than the defendant to know ones and for all where he stood.

On the question whether the 30-year tariff had been fixed and communicated to the applicant, His Lordship said that the 1985 decision was in context.

At that time the Home Secretary had held him in contempt, he had envisaged that his decision would be communicated to the applicant; he had envisaged that a local review committee would consider her case, but probably defer a review for years.

He had not, as Mr Howard later did, asserted a power to increase a tariff once set and had made it plain that he would not increase a tariff once a formal review had been given. He could not have supposed it necessary to reserve a right to reduce a tariff.

If that were so, it would appear that the majority accepted the lawfulness of such a power in principle. But in any event that principle would not apply to a case such as the present where the 30-year tariff had not been fixed and communicated to the applicant.

That approach to the Home Secretary's role in relation to mandatory life sentence prisoners

was wholly consistent with the analysis in *Finlay and Doodly*.

His Lordship rejected further challenges to the lawfulness of the 1990 and 1997 decisions on the grounds of failure to make disclosure and to invite representations as required by *Doodly*, irrationality, defeat of the applicant's legitimate expectation and want of reasons.

However, he parted from the case, uneasily conscious that the issues which might really underlie it were not before the court.

There was room for serious debate whether the task of determining how long convicted murderers should serve in prison as punishment for their crimes should be undertaken by the judiciary, as in the case of discretionary life prisoners, or, as now, by the executive.

The applicant clearly felt that she was held hostage to public opinion, condemned to pass the rest of her life in prison, although no longer judged a danger to anyone, because of her notoriety and the public outcry which would fall on any Home Secretary who ordered her release.

But, no doubt wisely, she made no accusation of bad faith or that the Home Secretary had exercised his discretion for any improper or ulterior purpose or had taken into account any irrelevant or improper consideration.

Had such a charge been made the court would have had to consider it and any evidence in rebuttal and also the extent to which, if at all, the Home Secretary might properly take account of public opinion.

But that challenge had not been made and the court had to confine its decision to the grounds argued before it.

Mr Justice Hooper agreed with both judgments and Mr Justice Aspin delivered a concurring judgment.

Solicitors: Taylor Nichol, Finsbury Park Treasury Solicitor.

Past sentences for firearms offences sometimes failed to reflect public concern

Regina v Avis and related appeals and applications

Before Lord Bingham of Cornhill, Lord Chief Justice, Mr Justice Douglas Brown and Mr Justice Kay [Judgment December 16]

Gives the clear public need to discourage unlawful possession and use of firearms, both real and imitation, and Parliament's intention expressed by the continuing increase in maximum penalties, the courts should treat such offences under the Firearms Act 1968, as amended by the Firearms (Amendment) Act 1994, as serious.

Past sentences for such offences had sometimes failed to reflect their seriousness and the justifiable public concern they aroused.

Save for minor infringements, offences committed under sections 1(1), 2(1), 3, 4, 5(1A), 16, 16A, 17(1) and (2), 18(1), 19 and 21(4), would generally merit custodial sentences, even on a plea of guilty and where the offender had no previous record. On breaches of sections 4, 5, 16, 16A, 17(1) and (2), 18(1), 19 or 21, the custodial term was likely to be considerable, and where particular factors were present, terms at or approaching the maximum might be appropriate.

THE LORD CHIEF JUSTICE, giving the judgment of the court, said that review of the level of sentence for firearms offences had been prompted by considerations that:

1 In recent cases, the Court of Appeal had criticised sentences imposed or upheld in previous cases as inadequately reflecting the gravity of such offences; that accorded with the subjective impression of a number of judges that cases involving firearms came before them much more frequently than was once the case, especially in some parts of the country.

The unlawful possession and use of firearms was generally regarded as a grave offence of danger to society: firearms might be used to take life or cause serious injury and to further the commission of other serious crimes.

Often the victims would be those charged with the enforcement of the law or the protection of persons or property. In the conflicts which occurred between competing criminal gangs, often related to the supply of drugs, the use and possession of firearms provoked an escalating spiral of violence.

Where imitation firearms were involved the risk to life and limb was absent but such weapons could be and often were used to frighten victims in order to reinforce unlawful demands. Such

minimum term that might be imposed when determining appeals against sentences by Tony Avis, Richard Barton and Gerald Thomas and refusing applications for leave to appeal against sentence by Richard Trottong, Shaun Marquez and Harold Goldsmith.

Mr Roderick Price, Mr Richard Thackeray, Mr John Lloyd-Thomas, Mr Kevin Clarke, Ms Serafina Tierney, solicitor, Mr David Bradshaw, respectively, for the appellants and applicants, all assigned by the Registrar of Criminal Appeals; Mr Nicholas Hilliard as amicus curiae.

THE LORD CHIEF JUSTICE, giving the judgment of the court, said that review of the level of sentence for firearms offences had been prompted by considerations that:

1 What sort of weapon was involved? Genuine weapons were more dangerous than imitation firearms, loaded firearms than unloaded, unloaded for which ammunition was available. Possession of a firearm which had no lawful use, such as a sawn-off shotgun, would be viewed even more seriously than possession of a firearm capable of lawful use.

2 What, if any, use had been made of the firearm? The court had to take account of all the circumstances surrounding any use made of the firearm: the more prolonged and premeditated and violent the use was the more serious the offence was likely to be.

3 With what intention, if any, did the defendant possess or use the firearm? Generally the most serious offences under the Act were those requiring proof of a specific criminal intent to endanger life, cause fear of violence, resist arrest, commit an indictable offence. The more serious the act intended, the more serious the offence.

4 What was the defendant's record? The seriousness of any firearm offence was inevitably increased if the offender had an established record of committing other offences or crimes of violence.

The court had to consider whether the offence had been committed in the course of the commission of another offence, and whether the defendant had been previously convicted of that offence.

The court had to consider whether the offence was committed with intent to injure or to resist arrest or prevent the arrest of another, and for which the maximum had been raised by the 1994 Act from three to five years.

5 Section 2(1)(c) of the offence of possessing a firearm or ammunition without a certificate carried a maximum raised by the 1994 Act from three to five years.

6 Section 2(1)(d) of the offence of possessing a firearm or ammunition with intent to endanger life or another; for that offence a maximum of 10 years was provided.

7 Section 4 by which it was an offence to shorten the barrel of a shotgun, to convert certain items into a firearm and to commit an offence under section 1(1) in the aggravated form set out in section 4(4) by possessing, purchasing or acquiring a shortened shotgun or converted firearm the maximum had been increased by the Criminal Justice Act 1992 from five to seven years.

8 Section 19: whereby the offence of possessing a firearm and ammunition in a public place was increased by the 1994 Act from one year to two years.

9 Section 30(2) by which it was an offence for a person to have with him a firearm or imitation with intent to commit an indictable offence or to resist arrest or prevent the arrest of another for which the maximum had been raised by the 1994 Act from four to six years.

10 Section 31(2) by which it was an offence for a person to have with him a firearm or imitation with intent to commit an indictable offence or to resist arrest or prevent the arrest of another for which the maximum had been raised by the 1994 Act from four to six years.

11 Section 32(2) by which it was an offence for a person to have with him a firearm or imitation with intent to commit an indictable offence or to resist arrest or prevent the arrest of another for which the maximum had been raised by the 1994 Act from four to six years.

12 Section 33(2) by which it was an offence for a person to have with him a firearm or imitation with intent to commit an indictable offence or to resist arrest or prevent the arrest of another for which the maximum had been raised by the 1994 Act from four to six years.

13 Section 34(2) by which it was an offence for a person to have with him a firearm or imitation with intent to commit an indictable offence or to resist arrest or prevent the arrest of another for which the maximum had been raised by the 1994 Act from four to six years.

14 Section 35(2) by which it was an offence for a person to have with him a firearm or imitation with intent to commit an indictable offence or to resist arrest or prevent the arrest of another for which the maximum had been raised by the 1994 Act from four to six years.

'Eighty people came in one by one to be told they had to go. Imagine the agony for a young editor'

After a controversial start and reports of low staff morale, Richard Addis, Editor of *The Express*, is still hopeful of a change in his paper's fortunes. Interview by Michael Leapman

Richard Addis has filled the Editor's chair at *The Express* for just over two years, but still finds it uncomfortable. "I've never liked this MFI leather-covered furniture," he confides to me. And when Stephen Grabiner, the laddish chief executive of United Newspapers, arrives to join us, Addis teases him with a plea for an office makeover.

Grabiner hedges: "After a year of year-on-year sales increases you can have your new furniture."

"So that will be in six months," is Addis's triumphant retort. He swivels on the despised chair to face me. "Make a note," he commands.

Addis is right to underline that sales of the mid-market tabloid, now called simply *The Express* after the effective merger of the daily and Sunday editions, have been on a gently rising curve since the middle of the year, compared with the same period in 1996. The advance is insignificant, however, compared with the sharper gains made by its chief rival, the *Daily Mail*. And despite Addis's editorial innovations, the gap between the two papers continues to widen.

But he believes that changes in the nation's social and political climate may at last be working in favour of the new paper he is creating from a riddle that, before he arrived in December 1995, had been in retreat for decades.

Turn the clock back 30 years. In 1967 the *Daily Express*, just beginning its long post-Beaverbrook decline, sold just under four million copies a day — nearly half a million down from its crusading peak in the late Fifties. The *Daily Mail* was at just more than two million. Both were struggling against the all-powerful *Daily Mirror*, selling more than five million comfortably.

Ten years later, all three had been damaged by Rupert Murdoch's revitalised *Sun*, then about to overtake the *Daily Mirror* at 3.7 million. *The Express* was down to 2.5 million and the *Daily Mail* 1.8 million. By 1987 the *Daily Mail*, still at 1.8 million, was on the brink of overthrowing the demoralised *Daily Express*. Today the *Daily Mail*, with 2.23 million, is 7 per cent up on last year while *The Express*, on 1.21 million, has improved its circulation by less than 1 per cent — still slightly below what it was when Addis took over.

Despite that, company audits show the paper has remained profitable and Addis, the former executive editor of the *Daily Mail*, believes he is achieving a significant turnaround at last.

"We set about things with great gusto, like you would in a badly ruined garden — hacking and slashing and cutting things down," he recalls of his first few weeks as Editor. "Within weeks we were producing an *Express* that was quite different."

The changes began in January 1996. Nearly every day the paper carried an announcement of some startling development. Harking back to *The Express*'s

famous history, Addis restored Beachcomber, the whimsical columnist created by J.B. Morton in the Thirties, and reintroduced the pseudonymous William Hickey gossip column, dropped in the Eighties.

New upmarket columnists — Mary Kenny, Anthony Holden, Alexander Chancellor — were engaged. Ray Hattersley was hired as a television critic. With some fanfare, the letters page was brought from the back of the paper to somewhere near the front and letters were solicited from celebrities such as Terry Wogan, John Humphrys, Jimmy Hill and the Duchess of Kent. A page of answers to mundane queries was launched, aping the *Daily Mail*.

Some of these innovations have survived, but the letters page soon returned to the back of the paper, taking Beachcomber with it. Chancellor and Hattersley have moved on. "It was all quite a healthy

plus to the requirements of the streamlined seven-day paper.

Senior staff say that Addis got the job over Douglas because he did everything the management demanded and never once defended the editorial department from the cost-cutters.

Although he had fired a few people in the initial pruning, this was the first time that Addis, then 40, had been involved in such a wholesale slaughter. He says it sickened him. He is a mild-mannered man who, as a youth, had thought of becoming a monk. It all went against the grain.

"Eighty people came in one by one and were told they had to go. It was a horrible atmosphere. People queued outside, knowing what they were going to be told. Imagine the agony of that for a new young editor," he says.

But imagine, too, the even greater agony of the victims, some of whom had spent the best part of a lifetime with the paper. There are still complaints about the brutality of the cull, in particular about Addis's failure to break the news in person to all the people who had to go. Because there were so many, he saw only about half, leaving senior executives to deal with the others.

Former staff say it is a nonsense to suggest that he knew "the agony" of the sackings because he typically left it to others to do the dirty work. Apocryphal stories circulated that those fortunate enough to be summoned to his office often kept their jobs if they were shrewd enough to weep or to claim affection and veneration for St Paul, Addis's favourite saint.

His approach was reportedly crass, telephoning the long-serving New York correspondent and inquiring: "How would you like a rather large cheque?" "It was horrible but I could see it was necessary," says the man who is also reported to have likened sacking staff to clearing out an old sock drawer. Critics also claim that when his deputy, Ian Monk, faced dismissal for suspected corrupt practice, Addis defended him until told by Lord Hollick that both would then have to go. Monk left that night.

"I'm glad to say the atmosphere now is much happier, with the office decked out with Christmas cards and all the departments having their parties," says Addis.

Survivors, however, find ironic his instructions that "staff must misbehave or be sacked" at his Christmas party (prosaically called the "St Lazarus Day Party") this week, since this was the first *Express* Editor to frown on the practice of lunch. Staff were instructed that if lunch was required to get a story, then "forget the project and passionately wanted the victory."

In the event Lord Hollick gave no such instruction (although there were some notably pro-Blair news stories) and *The Express* half-heartedly advised its readers to vote Conservative. Since the election the paper has grown increasingly supportive of the Government; last week its main feature concluded that Mr Blair was a greater radical reformer than Baroness Thatcher.

"Ten years ago our readers would have quivered with rage at that," Addis concedes. "But we did some research. We found that in May half our readers voted



Richard Addis is rumoured to have kept staff who were shrewd enough to claim they venerated St Paul, his favourite saint

will improve the paper a lot. Clive Hollick is very enthusiastic about newspapers. When he arrived we weren't sure that he would be." Lord Hollick is also known to be enthusiastic about new Labour and Addis wondered at first whether this would cause friction, given *The Express*'s traditional conservatism.

"If you were him, wouldn't you have told me that I had to endorse Blair in the election? I was expecting him to say that — he was so much part of the Blair project and passionately wanted the victory."

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"Ten years ago our readers would have quivered with rage at that," Addis concedes. "But we did some research. We found that in May half our readers voted

Tory and half Labour. A month later we did a survey and 90 per cent of those who voted Tory said they were quite happy with the Labour Government.

"We think we have found a new middle class which has emerged as an important force in the past ten years and which does vote Labour. It has different obsessions to the Thatcherite middle class that David English built the *Mail* on so brilliantly."

"We are taking a newspaper that has had at least ten years of being in the hands of people who didn't love it, didn't care for it and didn't invest in it. We are starting to love and care for it. But it takes a very long time to reverse a decline, especially one that has been going on for so long."

Neither man expects an imminent dramatic improvement, but they are encouraged by evidence that some readers of the "red top" tabloids — *The Sun* and *The Express*'s sister paper, the *Daily Star* — are switching to the middle market.

There have been many predictions of his imminent departure, but so far Addis, famous for maintaining public insouciance in the face of adversity, has stayed firmly put.

were so close together." He debated with his wife about whether to leave the sex and body issue hanging around at home (they did, I didn't). "The average age of our readers is the late twenties, and I doubt whether more than 10 to 15 per cent have families. Bluntly, it's not a magazine for the middle aged," he says.

FURTHER signs of the timely death of laddism? The London Evening Standard's Friday ES Magazine, geared towards young males, is launching in January as a unisex product, with more fashion, lifestyle articles and a glossy front cover. Editor Adam Edwards said sadly that the men's columns (Gizmos, Tube Talk and Pike Fishing) are being shunted together on one forlorn page — a men's corner, rather like women's pages in the 1970s. Out completely are guides to the best strip clubs competitions to win a greyhound, but back come the stars and health. I predict it will look just like *The Sunday Times Style* magazine.

WATCHING the British Comedy Awards last Saturday, it struck me that as Jonathan Ross fleshes out, he is beginning to look (and sound) like Harry H. Corbett of *Steptoe & Son*. The fact that the sparkly dinner suit he has worn for the past three years is now too tight only heightened the resemblance.

the media interview

process," Addis insists. "I would defend it as a way of indicating change — making dramatic moves when you arrive, then settling down. I thought *The Express* desperately needed a heart."

But the response of readers was negative. Circulation continued to sink.

Then in August 1996 came the merger of United Newspapers, owners of *The Express* titles, and Lord Hollick's television vision-led conglomerate MAI. Grabiner was hired from *The Daily Telegraph* to run the newspaper side of the merged company, United News and Media.

The new management team found Addis depressed by his lack of initial success. "When I first met Stephen and Lord Hollick, I told them I wasn't sure whether I could do anything with the paper," he recalls. "I was philosophically accepting that maybe we were at the end of the road."

Lord Hollick and Grabiner disagreed.

They began by imposing tight cost

controls which led to the merger of the daily and Sunday papers, with a reduced staff under a single editor. This meant that either Addis or Sue Douglas, the Editor of *The Sunday Express*, would have to fall on their sword, and they both knew it. It was a tense time.

"I wasn't sure that it wouldn't be me who would have to go," he recalls. "But Sue and I actually managed, rather miraculously, not to fall out over it."

In the event Douglas, who had been appointed at the same time as Addis, was the reluctant loser. Most of her senior staff went with her, along with many other long-term employees thought to be sur-

The discreet commercial charm of ITV



made with the wintery scene and the strapline "Wishing You a Perfect Day". By the way, *Perfect Day* has raised £1 million for Children in Need, and is about to be released internationally. Frost (Jane) has received no special bonus, but says she chose to work for the BBC because she wanted her small children to grow up in a cultured world with the same privileges she had enjoyed.

But how can she top *Perfect Day*? Well, in January the next phase of BBC branding gets into gear and she has persuaded a reluctant Director-General, John Birt, to have a special *Christmas* card

were becoming ominously pompous" because they had swallowed Labour's line and truly believe that Cabinet Ministers and the Prime Minister would prefer to appear on its breakfast show than the *Today* programme because more people watch it. Didn't the GMTV executive think this might be true? "Don't be daft," came the tart response. This is in marked contrast to the air of self-confidence that buoys up *Today* even in the midst of its spat with Labour spin doctors. When *The Sunday Times* reported that Tony Blair didn't listen to *Today* I tackled the presenters, including John Humphrys and the BBC's

news executives. They all said the same thing: "Don't believe it."

PHEW, what a relief to find this week's *Time Out* has stuck to Christmas topics.

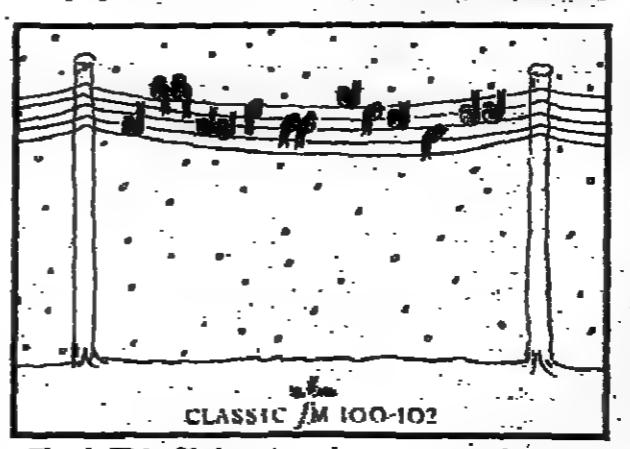
Last week's issue — bearing the cover line "Does size matter?" — was stuffed with

so many full-frontal that it belonged on the top shelf. Two weeks earlier there had been an explicit sex directory.

The content surely sits oddly with the magazine's sections on children's outings and family entertainment.

Tony Elliott, the publisher and a father of two children, aged nine and seven —

says: "It was unfortunate they



Classic FM's Christmas card: can you spot the tune?



■ WILL the sound of a mobile phone ringing away inside its Christmas box make you smile or scream? Will an absent father faxing over the wrapping paper to his distant son melt your heart? As commercialism bites ever deeper into ITV's festive programming, viewers' reactions to these images will be watched closely. For the first time all of ITV's seasonal specials, starting with Jack Dee's on Sunday, are being sponsored, by Panasonic. But will this increased, repetitive clutter lead people to zap to another channel? The growth in credits, which began so innocently with Powergen's umbrellas on weather reports, is starting to annoy. The recent Doritos credits attached to ITV Movies — in which dead famous faces make crunching noises — produced a hundred complaints to the Independent Television Commission, which says "it certainly hit a nerve".

The problem is that under sponsorship rules, companies cannot show their products directly. So Panasonic's £500,000 for its 15-second slots has to focus on suggestive noises: the phone's ring and the fax machine's singing electronic notes. These, of course, are the very things people want to escape from at Christmas, aren't they?

■ THOSE switching over to the BBC may find themselves

TV violence comes in all shapes and forms

THERE is just time to squeeze in a last serious television issue before Santa Claus movies and extended Christmas specials such as *Men Behaving Badly* start to dominate the small screen.

It is necessary to do so at a time when goodwill and good spirits are higher on most people's agendas than serious issues, because an interesting piece of research on understanding violence on television, published this week, might have escaped your attention.

The work, commissioned by the UK's main broadcasting groups, plus the Broadcasting Standards Commission, no pugnat when it comes to seeking out gratuitous violence and stopping it, reveals that most viewers do not spontaneously express concern about violence on television.

It is hardly a conclusion designed to attract headlines. How much more satisfying, not to mention newsworthy, to be able to blame violence on television for the disintegration of society and record public outrage on the subject.

The "qualitative" research, as they call it in the trade, was based on detailed discussions with 20 groups designed to be a national cross-section in terms of sex, age, class and region.

It found that while precise definitions of violence tend to be personal, most people are capable of distinguishing between violent acts that are more graphic, realistic and shocking and those that are "less real, less graphic and generally less perturbing". And guess what, most people do not see the slapstick violence of a James Bond movie, an old-fashioned western or even a cartoon as violent.

These findings by Andrew Irving Associates, a company with experience of investigating social policy issues, but who are newcomers to the media violence debate which has been running for longer than *Coronation Street*, amount to common sense.

What is more, the groups were able to map out their own selected examples of types of violence linked to particular programmes and what it meant to them.

There is the "fantasy/harmless" category exemplified by James Bond and the "historical/educational" violence of Sharpe. The often blood-soaked episodes of *Casualty* is rated "everyday family drama", and then there is the "real life" of boxing and the news and "adult (unacceptable) drama" in

the shape of the rape scene in the drama *London Bridge*. What is interesting is that for men all five categories amounted to acceptable viewing. Women drew the line at "adult (unacceptable) drama".

The study, which involved 124 people, of whom only 18 spontaneously mentioned concern about violence on television, found a range of attitudes. At one extreme there was a minority, mainly female and elderly, who disliked programmes with graphic violence. At the other end of the spectrum there was a male minority very tolerant of extreme violence.

Most viewers were in the middle and had an upper limit of some kind. They found very graphic, vivid portrayals of fictional or real-life violence off-putting.

The findings by Andrew Irving seem obvious, yet they do represent a fresh approach to the problems of violence on television. Until now, the tendency has been to count individual acts of violence on television, sometimes even "violent" acts in

Tom and Jerry cartoons, and added them up as if they were all the same. Absurd comparisons are then made between years or characters.

That violence has gone up or down on a percentage basis.

Here, at least, researchers are trying to get to grips with the differences between portrayals of violence and the varying meanings ascribed to them by different people. It should be compulsory reading for those great experts on violence on television.

Inevitably, the survey is only the beginning. The Institute of Communications Studies at the University of Leeds will be taking the issue further using video-editing techniques. The Leeds research will try to uncover people's thinking by allowing them to produce their own versions of violent scenes.

Of course, not even Santa Claus could provide a definitive answer to the biggest question of all — the extent to which, if at all, fictional violence on television contributes to real violence. There are just too many variables. But until the media research equivalent of Fermat's last theorem is finally cracked, a cautious approach to explicit, gratuitous or sadistic violence on television might be wise.

• Fresh research into understanding violence on television is available from the JTC Information Office, 33 Foley Street, London, W1P 7LB.



BBC1 will offer 45 minutes of *Men Behaving Badly* on Christmas Day, but there are those who feel the charm of the year's smash hit is waning

Short on Christmas crackers

The good news this Christmas is that there is a brilliant line-up of festive television programmes. Brilliant, that is, if you happen to be under 10.

For adults who have little other than television to boost their spirits as they confront a mélange of over-excited children and flagging relatives, the menu looks sparse. Unless you happen to have a fetish for the Spice Girls, the workings of Willy Wonka's chocolate factory or have time to become a cartoon addict, you might find the radio a more inspiring option on the day. The combined Christmas Day schedules of the BBC, ITV and Channel 4 must surely rank as some of the most unremarkable of years.

The BBC has spent £42 million on its package for the season, and to give credit where it is due, has at least tried to entertain us during Christmas evening, when three hit comedies are screened back to back on BBC1. From 9pm we are served with a 70-minute *One Foot in the Grave* special, starring Richard Wilson, followed by 45 minutes of *Men Behaving Badly* and half an hour of Nick Hancock's sports quiz *They Think It's All Over*.

Rather unfairly for the BBC, though,

it all somehow feels a little flat, and that is almost certainly because we are spoilt by the memory of last year's comedy classic, the critically acclaimed *Only Fools and Horses*. The Christmas Day episode pulled in more than 18 million viewers and was followed by another episode on December 29 that was watched by a record audience of more than 24 million.

One Foot in the Grave, while still original, quality comedy, is surely now rather long in the tooth, and there are those who say that even the charm of this year's smash hit *Men Behaving Badly* is waning. Lovers of comedy might be better advised to tune into BBC2 at 2.15pm this year to watch half an hour of *Shooting Stars*.

Last year ITV was severely trounced by the BBC during Christmas week. It managed to get only one programme in the ratings top ten — *Coronation Street*. This year, however, there is scarcely any sense of a ratings battle between the two terrestrial giants. ITV is pitting the *Muppet's Christmas*

Carol against BBC1's *Noel Edmonds' Christmas Presents* after the Queen's message. Its afternoon film, *Home Alone II*, is scheduled against BBC1's *The Mask*, fairly uninspiring match.

Perhaps the slot that will be the most fiercely contested among families is at 4pm, when BBC1 screens *The Flintstones* against ITV's *The Spice Girls Live in Concert*.

Channel 4, as is customary, offers a totally different schedule, opting for gravitas and culture. At 12.40 it screens a documentary tribute to Diana, Princess of Wales, followed by a film about the nurses who fought to save soldiers' lives during the First World War.

After the *Alternative Christmas Message*, this year delivered by Margaret Gibney, the Belfast schoolgirl who wrote to 150 world leaders asking for peace in the province, there is a performance of Verdi's *Requiem* with Luciano Pavarotti. In the evening we are offered the English National Opera's production of *The Damnation of Faust*. Over the season generally, of course, there are some potential gems, such as the BBC's *The Woman in White*, BBC2's comedy drama *Mothering Time* and ITV's *The Canterbury Ghost*, screened on Boxing Day.

For children, BBC1 offers a stunning line-up, starting with a Christmas *Teletubbies* (scheduled more than two hours later than usual to allow children to open their presents). *Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory*, *Peter and the Wolf* and, later, *Top of the Pops* and *Animal Hospital*.

ITV seems rather less inviting, but on Christmas morning it does offer the Hollywood movie *Honey I Shrunk the Kids*, and the first screening of the cartoon *Father Christmas and the Missing Reindeer*, featuring the voice of David Jason as Santa.

And for those who will inevitably complain that Christmas is losing its magic, let us not forget that an important television tradition will be broken this year. For the first time ITN, not the BBC, will bring us the Queen's Christmas message. There is speculation that it will be broadcast live for the first time and will definitely go out on the Internet. Christmas simply isn't what it used to be.

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Please Reply to Box No 9127

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Please submit your CV to Sue Rout, Estée Lauder Companies, 71-73 Grosvenor Street, London W1X 0BH, or telephone for an application form on 0171 409 6897 (24 hour answerphone).

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GRAND PRIX

PAUL STEWART
RACING

Opportunities exist in key media positions at both Stewart Grand Prix, who made their successful entry into the FIA Formula 1 World Championship in 1997, and Paul Stewart Racing, who again took both the British Formula 3 and Formula Vauxhall titles this year.

Media Relations Manager - Stewart Grand Prix

The successful candidate will travel to all round of the FIA Formula 1 World Championship to write and distribute media releases, liaise with the international media, arrange interviews for drivers and other team personnel, and organise media functions on behalf of the team. Identifying media opportunities both for the team and its sponsor-partners and developing media strategies are key aspects of this position, for which applicants should demonstrate substantial experience in media related work. One or more foreign languages are desirable, as is the ability to write with clarity under pressure. Knowledge of the Formula 1 environment is crucial.

Press Officer - Paul Stewart Racing

This new position would suit applicants willing to attend all F3 races and some Formula One rounds. Candidates should be able to update and rewrite the existing media documentation, organise media coverage of PSR's 1998 launch, and handle day to day media enquiries. Fostering close relations with the national, local and trade press is an important aspect of the job, which will also involve managing press cuttings and photographic holdings.

Remuneration package commensurate with qualifications and experience.

Please reply in writing with a full CV to:

Stewart Grand Prix Ltd/Paul Stewart Racing (UK) Ltd
16 Tanners Drive, Blakelands, Milton Keynes,
Buckinghamshire, MK14 5BW.
Quote reference SPR(SGP) or PPR(PSR)

Research Assistant and Consulting Assistant

Frank N. Magid Associates Ltd., a worldwide leading research and consultation firm, is seeking a research assistant in our London office. This individual will assist research analysts in the design, analysis, and preparation of presentation materials for market research projects. Position requires an individual with excellent oral and written communication skills; the ability to function as a part of a team; good organisational skills; computer skills; knowledge of and some experience in the design, application, and analysis of survey research. Prefer an individual with at least a university degree in communications, journalism, market research, or social science. Previous media experience is desirable. Multi language proficiency is also a plus.

Frank N. Magid Associates Ltd. is also looking for a consulting assistant to assist senior consultants by providing writing support for various projects. Responsibilities will include, but not be limited to, assisting with critiques of client materials; writing and developing internal and external communications materials; and maintaining a working knowledge of current television news presentation, advertising, and promotion trends. This position requires an individual who has excellent analytical, writing, interpersonal communication, and organisational skills. Prefer an individual with knowledge of or experience in television newsroom environment; a degree in communications, journalism, or related area; and experience in television journalism or related area.

If interested and qualified, please send cover letter, thesis or other major writing sample, and curriculum vitae to:

Amy Jo Reimer
Corporate Recruiter
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Mayfair
London W1R 9PL

Marketing Manager Specialised New Products

International marketing company based in the UK, which also develops and produces new consumer non-food products in co-operation with third parties with specific reference to packaging and specification of products. The successful applicant will be an experienced marketing executive responsible for the "New Product" sector of our business. In-depth knowledge of barcode technology and specialised printing units is required. Also essential is a strong background in the US market and the ability to develop our exports. Proven experience in the aforementioned areas, a University degree in a related discipline, and 6-8 years managerial experience are mandatory.

Please send a full CV to Box No 9090

SENIOR REPORTER

Leading UK Chinese newspaper is looking for a senior reporter to work in London. Candidates must have minimum 5 years experience working with a Hong Kong Chinese media; conversant with social and political affairs in Hong Kong and UK; and fluent in spoken and written Chinese (Cantonese and Mandarin) and English.

Detailed CV with salary expected should be sent to: Personnel Department, Sing Tao, 46 Dean Street, London W1V 5AP.

CULTURES

Will you vote for me? You must be joking!

Barbara Follett, the Labour MP for Stevenage, always made sure during the election campaign that voters were issued with Blu-Tack along with their posters and that there was wine to keep up spirits in her "War Room".

The archetypal new Labour candidate also knew how to thank supporters, such as Lord Attlee, the film producer, who just happened to turn up on the doorstep of her Hertfordshire home.

"If you are watching this, Dickie," says Follett, peering into the camera. "I just want to say I think you are wonderful because you make us all feel special."

The old Labour campaign of Ken Livingstone had neither Blu-Tack, wine nor film-industry peers, and usually consisted of the solitary, thankless task of addressing the intercom systems outside windy blocks of flats in Brent East, North London.

"Will you vote for me on May 17?" Livingstone asks. "You must be joking!" the disembodied voice replies.

The Eurosceptic Conservative candidate for Northampton North, Tony Marlow, spreads the message hopefully, with "Keep the pound and Tony Marlow". The voters kept only the pound.

The insights into the real life of the election campaign of 1997 come from one of the most unusual political documentaries to be made in Britain — two programmes of *Campaign Confessions*, to be shown on BBC2 next week. Ten candidates were

chosen from a variety of parties and constituencies as geographically diverse as the Western Isles and St Ives in Cornwall. But the trick was to ask the chosen candidates to nominate a friend or relative to shoot the campaign with a Hi-8 video camera.

Charles Miller, the executive producer of *Campaign Confessions*, says: "We were looking for an alternative way of archiving what goes on in British politics by using Hi-8 cameras to get a greater sort of access, to get closer to the people."

The amateur camera operators included 13-year-old Cai Howells, son of Kim Howells, now the Education and Training Minister; Andre Eagle, the father of Maria, one half of Labour's Eagle twin MPs and Simon Fletcher, Livingstone's researcher. Follett chose John Seaman, a 19-year-old student, after she saw his work in an exhibition at an art college.

All the camera operators were brought to London for some training with cameras and instructions on how to pan shots, close-ups and how to persuade their subjects to talk to camera twice a day.

They had to film between 10 and 20 one-hour tapes during the campaign. Miller ended up ploughing through 225 tapes for material that was in focus with good sound.

Miller, a former BBC producer who is now freelance, says: "I think



Livingstone: is anybody there?



Follett: has everybody got wine?

that we achieved the original intention, which was to show politicians in the round, to show the interaction between the politics and the politicians at home with their children, and the stresses and strains on the rest of their lives, which show that, funny enough, politicians are human beings."

In spite of the informal shooting, the two 50-minute programmes are not video diaries because the BBC kept full editorial control, although

the candidates could express any reservations they might have had.

As a result, the incident when an over-enthusiastic supporter of Andrew George, the Liberal Democrat MP for St Ives, burns a Tory poster at the election-night party has not made it. And it seems there was no usable footage when Kim Howells forgot to engage the handbrake of his car and saw it gently roll downhill while he was talking to camera.

One controversial piece of film

involving the unsuccessful Conservative opponent of the Home Secretary Jack Straw in Blackburn is in the film. Geeta Sidhu gained the impression that someone in the Labour campaign was saying that she was anti-Muslim, and she flipped.

She retaliated by going around Blackburn in a loudspeaker van, saying: "Don't vote for a Jew. Jack Straw is a Jew. Jews are the enemy of the Muslims."

Sidhu, who lost heavily, later regretted her outburst and told Joan Bamber, 60, the former teacher filming her: "I said it because I was fuming. I must admit, I wish I hadn't done it."

The amateur camera operators seem to have enjoyed themselves greatly in their roles; sometimes Bamber was even heard to say: "Roll, baby, roll" as she was starting to film.

The outdoor scenes in the Howells campaign are by Steve Carter, a retired aircraft engineer, who found the process firing and demanding, yet exhilarating.

"I was amazed how much work went into it. To be a professional cameraman, you must be dedicated. I felt the strain. I was totally drained."

Now Charles Miller is working on another informal history — the story of the Labour Defence Review, filmed from inside the Ministry of Defence. But this time — partly for reasons of confidentiality and security — Miller will be operating the camera himself.

• *Campaign Confessions* will be shown on BBC2 on December 27 and 28 at 4.25pm.



Fleet Street turns on Tony

New Labour is providing the most prim, priggish and paternalist Government of this country since Oliver Cromwell — Alan Watkins in *The Independent* on Sunday. "Mr Robinson's actions shame himself, his Government and the principles on which his party and democratic governance stand. Better can be expected of those who hold public office in a democracy" — *The Observer*. "Mr Blair has many strengths. Among his greatest weaknesses is an obsession with not looking weak" — Andrew Rawnsley, *The Observer*.

There has been no more cheering development for the health and reputation of the British press in 1997 than the sudden recognition, especially by editors and commentators writing from the Left, that one of the historic duties of newspapers is to subject all governments to the most rigorous scrutiny.

Most editors were so exhilarated by the size of Tony Blair's triumph — or so mesmerised and inhibited by their failure to judge the mood of the people — that critical judgment was almost suspended after Labour's May 1 triumph.

A government with so big a majority can easily be tempted to exercise power arrogantly. Its leading members can compare themselves with Cardinal Wolsey, its spin-doctors may think they can always fix or distort the news agenda. As Harold Macmillan observed, however, it is "events" that upset governments and "events" — the Formula One affair, the tax affairs of Geoffrey Robinson, the late of lone parents and Labour's attack on John Humphrys after his Harriet Harman interview — have conspired to end Fleet Street's three-year honeymoon with Blair.

Suddenly, the British press has reverted to its proper role as gadfly to government, and the critics and satirists have come out of the closet. *The Times*, *The Sunday Times*, *The Daily Telegraph*, *The Guardian*, *The Observer* and *The Independent* on Sunday have all suggested that Robinson should resign unless he makes a better case for his offshore trusts. Suddenly, too, the spin-doctors, or their political masters, have lost their touch. Bullying editors, either by threats of libel writs (Robinson to *The Sunday Times* and *The Observer*) or intimidating letters (to Radio 4's *Today* or Lord Irvine of Lairg, the Lord Chancellor, to all national editors), simply puts them on their mettle.

The result of the bullying letter to the *Today* programme was that *The Times* review all the work. Do not expect the documentaries to survive. In fact, the RAC is a strong contender for *The Times* worst ad of the year award (full best and worst lists on January 2).

I THERE is endless rubbish written about strained times in the advertising and media industries, lament for the death of the liquid lunch means that they don't throw parties like they did in the good old days (ie, five years before the date of the moan).

What drive? Who are these journalists? The Christmas party season began in early November and continues unabated. Any vaguely fashionable restaurant (and Langans) is still heaving long after lunch. Evening parties are steaming with drunken, coked-up revellers who haven't heard that adland's in trouble.

Actually, the wildest parties have not been agency dos, but those thrown by media owners. Party of the season was arguably Channel 5's, where the highlight was the sticky situation on the stairwell, where the number of stripped and stranded modern young things retuning each other will have given David Elstein great cause for optimism.

• Stefano Hatfield is Editor of Campaign.

Christmas up for copywrite

Adland Christians want to reclaim the festival for Christ. Meg Carter reports

To some it is an unholy alliance. Yet a growing number of churches are adopting sophisticated advertising and marketing techniques to encourage more people to go to church. Luckily, they are attracting support from an unusual quarter — the advertising industry, where a group of Christians are donating their time and expertise.

"It's like a normal ad agency," explains Chas Bayfield, a creative at the London ad agency HHCL & Partners who is also a member of Christians in Media (CIM), an unofficial ad agency providing media communications to Christian causes. "We are believers and creatives, account planners and handlers, and media specialists who develop these campaigns in our spare time."

CIM knows the product it advertises inside and out and so can "push things a little further", Bayfield says. "Outsiders tend to believe in old stereotypes and to be overly cautious. We see beyond that."

CIM was set up four years ago by Francis Goodwin, managing director of the poster contractor Marden Dundo. He was involved in church advertising, providing hoardings for free. He placed a letter in the trade magazine *Campaign*, calling for others to support the cause.

His latest work is "Copywriting Christmas", an advertising campaign launched this week by the Churches Advertising Network, an affiliation of representatives from various denominations



The Copywriting Christmas campaign, launched by the Churches Advertising Network, an affiliation of representatives from various denominations

ing Christmas for Jesus, says the Rev Tom Ambrose, director of communications for the Church of England Diocese of Ely and a member of the network. "Copyright law protects the products of someone's skill, creativity, labour and time. We reckon that just about sums up God's input into Christmas and we are laying claim to that right."

Christmas has been hijacked by commercial interests, he believes. Just this week a poster for Marks & Spencer, which replaces the "a" in Christmas with M&S's trademark ampersand, was criticised by church leaders. "Our message is that Christ-

want to come to church, but we must not frighten off people within the church," Ambrose admits.

Last year's ad was a case in point. It had a cartoon of the three kings, with the line: "Bad hair day? You're a virgin, you've just given birth and now three kings have shown up. Find out the happy ending at a church near you." It failed to secure ministers' support, despite positive press coverage.

Another complication, says Mr Ambrose is that "it's not just about selling a single brand, like Heinz. We're providing materials for many denominations."



GREAT SINGING FRIENDLY ATMOSPHERE AND SOMETHING TO THINK ABOUT

© 1997 CHURCHES ADVERTISING NETWORK

A Christian circle of friends

Creators of the Levi's ads stitch up a sexy deal

TOP advertising network bosses will be spitting this week after missing out on the chance to acquire a slice of, arguably, the sexiest ad agency in the world.

Britain's Bartle Bogle Hegarty, famous for the likes of Levi's, Audi, Boden, and One Two One, has finally succumbed after years of relentless courting from virtually every major player. It is to sell a 40 per cent share of its equity to the Chicago-based Leo Burnett network for an undisclosed sum (somewhere close to £25 million would be a good estimate).

BBH is the agency that many in the business — particularly creatives, who actually make the ads — see as role model. Its consistent focus on business independence and its creative positioning earned it a reputation for integrity and excellence.

Since its 1982 launch, it has cleaned up at countless advertising awards ceremonies. Its glossy, art-directed work epitomised the 1980s. Think of Levi's "laundrette" and "bath" commercials, the bloke on the Harley rescuing his girlfriend from the City dealing room, the K-Shoes ad with the short-skirted woman cutting the balls off her boss's executive toy, "vorsprung durch technik".

The agency broke out of its fashion niche to become a main-

stream player in the UK, albeit with mixed success working for the likes of Asda, WH Smith, Cadbury and NatWest. But, like its peers, it was destined never to break into the UK top ten without being part of an international network.

In the 1990s, BBH began to attract international clients on the back of the Levi's success. It used the annual Cannes Advertising Festival to showcase its wares, to great effect. It has twice been



BBH began to attract international clients on the back of Levi's success

international agency of the year at Cannes and twice Campaign's UK agency of the year.

BBH has fed the trend that has seen small, local agencies creating work for the world (Levi's, Polaroid, Lego). It set up in Singapore in 1996 and plans to launch in the United States next year. Despite this, BBH has had to acknowledge that a relationship with a multinational is essential in order to have an effective global media delivery system. Leo Burnett seems a

perfect fit. The number one agency brand in the US, it has 83 offices in 72 countries and has built a reputation for solidity and integrity based on having relatively few, large clients, such as Procter & Gamble, Kellogg's, McDonald's and Pillsbury.

Its reputation for never losing business took a knock this year, however, when it lost McDonald's, United Airlines and American Express' business in the US. Chicago management responded quickly by shaking up the way the company bought media.

This deal will bring in a significant extra global media revenue stream, but its primary function is to make Leo Burnett sexist by association, especially as BBH made the approach.

BBH now has the money for expansion and, crucially, a deal allowing it to retain a 51 per cent controlling stake in perpetuity. The other agency big cheeses may bitch, but they would not have agreed to the minority stake. Perhaps the season of goodwill has

review all the work. Do not expect the documentaries to survive. In fact, the RAC is a strong contender for *The Times* worst ad of the year award (full best and worst lists on January 2).

IF EVER a company should ditch its advertising, that company is the RAC. This year's pretentious campaign of documentaries (its description) had "emperor's new clothes" written all over it.

Nobody, it appears, had the courage to tell the marketing department that the public doesn't give a fig that the RAC now sells bicycles, or what some internationally renowned guru thinks of the future. People want to know how long it will take the RAC to get there when they break down, and how much it will cost.

Inevitably, a new marketing director will arrive, and will



Talking has proved good for BT

review all the work. Do not expect the documentaries to survive. In fact, the RAC is a strong contender for *The Times* worst ad of the year award (full best and worst lists on January 2).

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RACING: RAIN CASTS DOUBT ON PARTICIPATION OF SENOR EL BETRUTTI AT KEMPTON PARK

Suny Bay turning into soft touch

By CHRIS MCGRATH

AT WORCESTER, where the racecourse is on the banks of the Severn, it is sometimes necessary to inspect the ground in a rubber dinghy. Things were not quite so bad at Kempton yesterday, but it would hardly have occasioned the groundstaff any surprise had they scattered the odd mallard or snipe when squelching over the turf that will, a week today, stage the Pertemps King George VI Chase. As it was, the only feathers flying were in the ante-post market.

Suny Bay, 4-1 with Coral two days ago, is now as short as 5-2 — on the basis that, if One Man has an Achilles' heel, it is more likely to become apparent on soft going. One Man, ever-favourite to win his third consecutive King George, has always been at his best on fast ground, whereas his fellow grey flourishes in the mud.

"It was good to soft already, then we had a quarter of an inch in a downpour this morning," the Kempton groundsman, Frank Pengelly, said yesterday. "The forecast says it's going to stay damp and showery, so I don't think it'll change much now."

If he is right, Senor El Betruti, the third member of this triptych of grey chasers,

will restrict his Christmas exertions to the hunting field: The romantic possibilities surrounding the horse — a dashing winner of the Tripleprint Gold Cup last weekend, and one of only three horses trained on a Cotswold farm by Susan Nock — seem likely to be denied. "Soft ground turns him into an old dog," his trainer said. "He's hopeless on it. He was floundering through the puddles this morning. It would be a shame, as he has come out of his race tremendously well."

Uncertainty likewise infects the connections of Rough Quest. Having nursed their 1996 Marsh Grand National winner back from injury, they were delighted by his comeback at Haydock last weekend. After yesterday's rain, Coral offers 8-1 from 10-1, but Terry Casey has not so much been debating whether to run, as auditioning for the lead in *Hamer*.

While conceding that it remained a distinct possibility that Rough Quest will run, the trainer said: "We won't make a final decision until the morning. He had a nice canter today, and we'll see how he is tomorrow. He has eaten up well since Haydock, where he just lost a bit of weight."

THUNDERER

12.40 Andante 2.10 Barmaseena Boy 2.40 Cadbury Castle 3.10 Listen Timmy 3.40 Arctic Camper

Timekeeper's top rating: 2.10 RAFFLES ROOSTER.

GONG GOOD TO SOFT TOTE JACKPOT MEETING SIS

12.40 EBF NATIONAL HUNT SERVICES HURDLE

(Quarrel div 1: £1,945, 2nd 4110d (8 runners)

101	9-1	CHESTERFIELD	25 1m 10f	U/C	3	T. Cope & Brookes	4-10	M. J. Ballou	8-1-10	B. Gribble	125
102	4-5-23	ANDANTE	25 1m 10f	(B) (Good)	1	J. Hallen	9-1-9	R. Murphy	10-1	T. Day	125
103	1-1	LESLIE'S CHASE	25 1m 10f	(Good)	1	A. P. McCoy	10-1	R. Murphy	10-1	R. Murphy	125
104	1-1	MARLBOROUGH	25 1m 10f	(Good)	1	T. Day	9-1-9	R. Murphy	10-1	T. Day	125
105	1-1	NOT FOR PART	25 1m 10f	(Good)	1	P. Hart	9-1-9	R. Murphy	10-1	R. Murphy	125
106	1-1	QUEEN'S PRINCESS	25 1m 10f	(Good)	1	T. Day	9-1-9	R. Murphy	10-1	R. Murphy	125
107	1-1	CLAUDE ELECTRIC	25 1m 10f	(Good)	1	M. K. Ryan	7-1	R. Murphy	10-1	R. Murphy	125
108	1-1	RAFFLES ROOSTER	25 1m 10f	(Good)	1	M. J. Ballou	7-1	R. Murphy	10-1	R. Murphy	125
109	4-5-17	CLAUDE ELECTRIC	25 1m 10f	(Good)	1	M. K. Ryan	7-1	R. Murphy	10-1	R. Murphy	125
110	1-1	RAFFLES ROOSTER	25 1m 10f	(Good)	1	M. J. Ballou	7-1	R. Murphy	10-1	R. Murphy	125
111	1-1	RAFFLES ROOSTER	25 1m 10f	(Good)	1	M. J. Ballou	7-1	R. Murphy	10-1	R. Murphy	125
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125	1-1	RAFFLES ROOSTER	25 1m 10f	(Good)	1	M. J. Ballou	7-1	R. Murphy	10-1	R. Murphy	125
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138	1-1	RAFFLES ROOSTER	25 1m 10f	(Good)	1	M. J. Ballou	7-1	R. Murphy	10-1	R. Murphy	125
139	1-1	RAFFLES ROOSTER	25 1m 10f	(Good)	1	M. J. Ballou	7-1	R. Murphy	10-1	R. Murphy	125
140	1-1	RAFFLES ROOSTER	25 1m 10f	(Good)	1	M. J. Ballou	7-1	R. Murphy	10-1	R. Murphy	125
141	1-1	RAFFLES ROOSTER	25 1m 10f	(Good)	1	M. J. Ballou	7-1	R. Murphy	10-1	R. Murphy	125
142	1-1	RAFFLES ROOSTER	25 1m 10f	(Good)	1	M. J. Ballou	7-1	R. Murphy	10-1	R. Murphy	125
143	1-1	RAFFLES ROOSTER	25 1m 10f	(Good)	1	M. J. Ballou	7-1	R. Murphy	10-1	R. Murphy	125
144	1-1	RAFFLES ROOSTER	25 1m 10f	(Good)	1	M. J. Ballou	7-1	R. Murphy	10-1	R. Murphy	125
145	1-1	RAFFLES ROOSTER	25 1m 10f	(Good)	1	M. J. Ballou	7-1	R. Murphy	10-1	R. Murphy	125
146	1-1	RAFFLES ROOSTER	25 1m 10f	(Good)	1	M. J. Ballou	7-1	R. Murphy	10-1	R. Murphy	125
147	1-1	RAFFLES ROOSTER	25 1m 10f	(Good)	1	M. J. Ballou	7-1	R. Murphy	10-1	R. Murphy	125
148	1-1	RAFFLES ROOSTER	25 1m 10f	(Good)	1	M. J. Ballou	7-1	R. Murphy	10-1	R. Murphy	125
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150	1-1	RAFFLES ROOSTER	25 1m 10f	(Good)	1	M. J. Ballou	7-1	R. Murphy	10-1	R. Murphy	125
151	1-1	RAFFLES ROOSTER	25 1m 10f	(Good)	1	M. J. Ballou	7-1	R. Murphy	10-1	R. Murphy	125
152	1-1	RAFFLES ROOSTER	25 1m 10f	(Good)	1	M. J. Ballou	7-1	R. Murphy	10-1	R. Murphy	125
153	1-1	RAFFLES ROOSTER	25 1m 10f	(Good)	1	M. J. Ballou	7-1	R. Murphy	10-1	R. Murphy	125
154	1-1	RAFFLES ROOSTER	25 1m 10f	(Good)	1	M. J. Ballou	7-1	R. Murphy	10-1	R. Murphy	125
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FOOTBALL: LIVERPOOL PRODIGY WARNED BY ENGLAND COACH

Caution from Hoddle challenges pace of Owen's emergence

By MATT DICKINSON

WHEN it comes to Michael Owen, there is no doubt that Glenn Hoddle likes what he sees. It is what the eye cannot detect, though, the inner workings of the young striker's mind, that the England coach remains uncertain about and it was the cause yesterday of a surprise shot across the Liverpool player's bows.

That there is little wrong with Owen's feet was proved on Wednesday night when, three days after his eighteenth birthday, he produced a remarkably assured performance in England Under-21s' 4-2 victory over Greece, his exceptional pace a threat for defenders of any age or calibre.

Keeping his size 6½ boots rooted to the ground, though, is evidently a troubling topic that has done the rounds at Lancaster Gate and it was something that Hoddle unexpectedly brought into the public domain yesterday.

"There are certain things he needs to stamp out of his game and from his off-the-pitch situation as well," Hoddle said, raising more questions than he answered. "I'm not going into details, but he's not the finished article that everyone says he is. The boy has extreme potential and extreme talent, as has Rio Ferdinand."



Owen: precocious talent

Hoddle, [the West Ham United defender]. But we will be keeping a steady eye on them to see how they progress.

"We have spoken about so many youngsters before and the potential has not come through. It is very difficult nowadays with everyone hyping things up and the minute they think they have arrived they stop still. They [Owen and Ferdinand] must not allow that to happen."

"Players like Alan Shearer, Teddy Sheringham and even Stuart Pearce at his age are still learning things about the game. I am still learning, so for any young player to think he has arrived is wrong. We can't give them a pill to learn. It only comes from the player."

The runs young Michael makes are exceptional for a player of his age. He really has a good perception of the game. But he is a lad who I have seen in the past in a couple of situations show he is still only a youngster and there is still room for improvement."

Given that Ferdinand had to be disciplined by Hoddle before he had even been capped, it is safe to assume that the England coach was not issuing idle threats.

It also perhaps reflected that Owen plays for Liverpool, a club not renowned for the self-discipline of its players. Jamie Carragher and Danny Murphy were two of the culprits ticked off after high jinks among the England under-21 players on the trip to Rome, while the Spice Boy tag — whether it be a lazy label or deserved nickname — will remain with the Anfield dressing-room as long as the team continues to underachieve.

Owen, so far, has shown no signs of straying from the straight and narrow. Indeed, at Anfield he is mocked as an Alan Shearer clone as much for his straight — some might even say dull — image as his knack for scoring goals.

Dealing with the prying and intrusions that are the flip-side to earning thousands of pounds a week is likely to prove as testing as maintaining the precocious talent that has already made him a long shot for inclusion in the senior World Cup squad for France.

Everton, struggling in the lower reaches of the FA Carling Premiership, yesterday denied that their captain, Gary Speed, has held talks with Newcastle United.

The Wales international midfield player had been linked with a move to St James' Park in an exchange deal involving Darren Peacock, the Newcastle defender.

It was a lucrative time to be a plumber in the Yorkshire village of Lowsonford, Warwickshire, had also been concerned that Showtime might not have had sufficient preparation for the show.

Emley yesterday as heavy rain followed the snow of Wednesday afternoon. Peter Matthews, nevertheless, had no hesitation in downing his tools to spend the day away from work. As the chairman of Emley, 13, who Skelton says, has "never been the same" since competing in the Olympic Games in Atlanta last year, suffered a bout of anaemia after her appearance at the Toronto show in Canada in early November. She had been out in the field recuperating until last week when she was brought in and hastily prepared for Olympia.

Her scintillating performance yesterday, however, belied no sign of any loss of form. Skelton, the seventh to go, produced a breathtaking round over the nine-fence course finish in 43.75sec.

"She may not be a Dollar Girl or a St.James," Skelton said, referring to two of his former top horses, "but

Gross warms to Pleat as potential colleague

By MATT DICKINSON AND RICHARD HOBSON

CHRISTIAN GROSS, who appears to need as much help as he can get in his worsening predicament as Tottenham Hotspur manager, has met David Pleat to discuss the club's vacant position of director of football.

While Gross claimed no appointment was imminent, it looks likely that Pleat, a former Spurs manager himself, who was sacked as Sheffield Wednesday manager earlier this season, will take up the new position next month.

The pair appear to have bonded well in their two-and-a-half-hour chat, with Gross claiming: "It was very interesting. He is a man who loves soccer and anybody who loves soccer is interesting to me. Before I came to the club, Alan Sugar [the chairman] said that he needed someone in this position. Maybe David Pleat will do it, but there is no decision. We need to talk more to get the feeling together."

Gross stressed that while Pleat would have youth and scouting responsibilities, he would not negotiate contracts with players or dictate who to buy. The demarcation of roles clearly needs further discussion with the Swiss coach admitting that Pleat may find it difficult not to meddle in first-team affairs.

"Over the last 24 years he was on the pitch as a manager and when

he has that job from day to day, it is an obsession and very difficult to stop," he said. "It is not easy to take a different role. Scouting is a problem we have to review here and David knows the English game and players very well."

Gross has yet to make a signing at Spurs and, despite talking with Everton, is unlikely to bring in Andy Hinchliffe, the left-back. Howard Kendall, the Everton manager, offered a swap deal in the hope of luring Les Ferdinand, Chris Armstrong or Steffen Iversen, but Ferdinand is staying put and the other two are injured.

Fears that Gary McAllister would miss the World Cup finale next summer have been removed after key-hole surgery on his injured knee, which revealed a small cardiac tear rather than ligament damage.

McAllister, the Coventry City and Scotland midfield player, will be out of action for two months.

Coventry have completed the signing of George Boateng, the Holland Under-21 captain. Boateng, 22, who can play at right back or in midfield, cost £250,000 from Feyenoord, who had originally valued him at £4 million. Boateng, who would have become a free agent next summer when his contract expired, rejected an offer from UCine, the Italian Serie A side.

In the shoot-out after the teams had finished level at 2-2,

There are work days and there are Emley Football Club days, and this is very definitely a football day," Matthews, revelling in the calls from reporters and well-wishers, said.



John Popey and Blushing Groom in full flight in the Christmas Candle Stakes yesterday

Showtime races back to form to give Skelton cracking start

By JENNY MACARTHUR

NICK SKELTON, who said he had

barely time even to look at the schedule for the Olympia showjumping championships before his arrival at the show yesterday because he had been too busy moving house, produced a dazzling turn of foot on his Olympic horse,

Virtual Village Showtime, to win the Christmas Candle Stakes, the main event of the opening performance yesterday.

Skelton, who has been preoccupied with his move "down the road" to a house in the village of Lowsonford, Warwickshire, had also been concerned that Showtime might not have had sufficient preparation for the show.

The mare, 13, who Skelton says, has "never been the same" since competing in the Olympic Games in Atlanta last year, suffered a bout of anaemia after her appearance at the Toronto show in Canada in early November. She had been out in the field recuperating until last week when she was brought in and hastily prepared for Olympia.

Her scintillating performance yesterday, however, belied no sign of any loss of form. Skelton, the seventh to go, produced a breathtaking round over the nine-fence course finish in 43.75sec. "She may not be a Dollar Girl or a St.James," Skelton said, referring to two of his former top horses, "but

she's a trier and can win some soft classes on her day."

Their time was only put in perspective when a succession of top partnerships — including Michael Whitaker on his Brussels Grand Prix winner, Virtual Village Showtime, and Ludger Beerbaum, the European champion from Germany, on Spreite Rush On, tried and failed to match his time.

Piet Raymakers, of Holland, a member of the gold medal-winning team at the 1992 Olympic Games and the winner of three Volvo World Cup qualifiers last year — came closest, finishing second in 47.12sec — some 3.37sec behind Skelton. Beurbaum, one of the favourites for the Volvo World Cup qualifier tomorrow, was a close third.

Skelton's win is a timely filip for the Warwickshire-based rider. In

RESULTS

CHRISTMAS CANDLE STAKES: 1. Virtual Village Showtime (N Skelton, GB) 0 in 43.75sec; 2. Ludger Beerbaum (P Raymakers, Holland) 0 in 47.12; 3. Spreite Rush On (L Beurbaum, Ger) 0 in 47.37.

THE PETPLAN FAMILY PAIRS RELAY: 1. Virtual Village Deep Heat and Virtual Village Rendi (L Whitaker and J Whited) 62.70; 2. Razors and Gold Horizon (M Lipman and A Lipman, Fornet, Razors and White Village Razors) (R and M Whitaker).

SPORT IN BRIEF

Hudson still in intensive care

ALAN HUDSON, the former England football international, was still critically ill in hospital yesterday after being injured in a road accident. His condition remained unchanged and he was continuing to be treated in the intensive care unit, a spokesman at the Royal London Hospital in Whitechapel said.

The 46-year-old former Chelsea and Arsenal midfield player needed a 14-hour operation to remove a blood clot from his brain after being in an accident with a car near his home in East London on Monday evening. He also suffered internal injuries.

Augusta bound

GOLF: Darren Clarke has received an invitation to the Masters next April. It is the first time that Clarke, 28, has been invited to Augusta. "It is a dream come true," Clarke said. The invitation to the first of the year's four major championships is an acknowledgement of his standing in the game. Clarke was fourth in the European money-list, second equal with Jesper Parnevik in the Open and was a member of the victorious Europe Ryder Cup team in September. He is ranked 36th in the world.

Stewart deals

MOTOR RACING: Jackie Stewart yesterday unveiled two new sponsorship deals to strengthen the finances of his Formula One team. The telecommunications company, MCI, and the Lear Corporation, one of the world's leading suppliers of automotive interior systems, will support Stewart Grand Prix. Stewart revealed that he has not signed backing from the manufacturer for the future, even though his team was one of the few on the grid last season without any form of tobacco backing.

Sampras back

TENNIS: Pete Sampras, the world No 1, expects to start practising again this weekend after injuring a calf muscle playing for the United States in the Davis Cup final against Sweden last month. Sampras said yesterday that he expects to play in the Australian Open next month.

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SERVING SUGGESTION

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Asking previously unthinkable questions

Television has been very well served by the environmental lobby over the past 20 years. All that videotape, courtesy of every agency from the BBC Natural History Unit to Greenpeace. All those stunning images, of everything from whales to oil slicks, stricken birds to smouldering rainforests. There had to be a day of reckoning and that day has come.

Come and gone. Two series, *Scare Stories* on BBC2 and *Against Nature* on Channel 4, have been revisiting environmental issues from a perspective less liberal, or less alarmist (choose your word), than the one with which we are familiar. Both series have just finished, so perhaps television will now return to the familiar ground of shedding video tears for our planet. If so, it leaves some important questions hanging in the air.

Last night *Scare Stories* ended with *Sinking the Ark*, which asked

whether mankind had not bent too far backwards in the direction of species protection. The programme served the useful function of explaining how massive public culls had elevated animals to a status seemingly higher than that of mere people, but of course a cause is not flavoured just because it enjoys slick publicity.

The programme was excellent while it was focusing on the issue of the whale, not quite so coherent when it tried to reinforce the point using several other creatures. The whale and its alleged saving by campaigners offers an object lesson in the manipulation of human emotions and there is no better example of the absurdities that some in the environment lobby have perpetrated.

Roger Payne, a marine biologist, discovered in the 1960s that whales could sing. As a result: "Suddenly one day I decided that I would spend the rest of my life trying to

do something to improve the way people look at whales." Payne has been as good as his word. But if the ability to sing automatically justified protected status, Dr O'Connor would be grade one listed.

Beyond question, the whale, with its enormous appetite, occupies an important position in the food chain. But that is not why governments have been lobbied, not to terrorise, by advocates of saving the whale (in some waters, they are threatened by over-population). The media, and not just television, put the whale on the fashion map by showing its great dignified torso and playing its haunting tunes. The food chain had nothing to do with it.

Similarly, as the programme showed, campaigns to save the tiger have skirted round the unfortunate fact that tigers eat people. When large areas of India and

REVIEW

Peter Barnard



Africa were turned into reservations and the hunting of tigers was banned, the increasing population of tigers killed the cattle of farmers whose tribes had occupied the land for a thousand years. But nobody launched Save the African Farmer with a gala dinner at the Dorchester. Instead, the programme reported, one million people were forced to up sticks and move somewhere else so that the protect-

ed tiger could roam (and cash-rich tourists could continue to safari).

In the West, people have more prosaic but equally important questions to resolve, such as: will my doctor do me any good? *Natural Born Healers* (Channel 4) is an interesting series about alternative medicine. Unlike alternative comedy, we can define what is an alternative to it: it is an alternative to having a GP examine you and write a prescription.

Last night the series took Roy Haggerty, a sufferer for three years from chronic fatigue syndrome, or ME, and sent him to Dr Julian Kenyan, a practitioner of complementary medicine, for a three-month course of treatment. By the end of it Roy seemed better and was able to mow his lawn, whereas before he became tired even if nobody can properly explain why the treatment works.

Roy's GP, Dr Peter May, was not very impressed with this course of action began and his

view did not appear to have changed when it ended: "So (Kenyan) is putting out wacky ideas, completely out of the blue and if he (Haggerty) gets better (Kenyan) will say they've got some basis in reality. Bizarre."

The real difference in approach is that Kenyan uses imagination in choosing a treatment whereas a GP's training is to treat demonstrable symptoms on a scientific basis. I would not presume to choose between these approaches, but if something works then it must be a legitimate treatment, even if nobody can properly explain why the treatment works.

Now that winter has finally arrived flies-on-the-wall are dying off. The latest to go by way of all such documentaries is *Dover* (ITV) which has been a fly on the wall of our busiest port these past few weeks. I missed the earlier episodes but if last night's

finale sums up the whole I can only say that it is surprising how difficult it can be to stay awake for 30 minutes.

The arrival of a cruise liner which had to disgorge 2,400 passengers and sail again 13 hours later with a new passenger complement might have offered rich pickings to the cameras, but all we got was a few passengers playing hunt-the-suitcase. There was also a poignant segment filmed on the day of the funeral of Diana, Princess of Wales as the port organised, with great efficiency and tact, the observing of the national one-minute silence.

Perhaps that cast a pall over the whole programme. Certainly there was little excitement to be had from the only other incident: customs men opening two chintz elephants to find cannabis hidden inside. That had the appearance of being filmed by an earler fly on a different wall.

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With *Sinking the Ark*, which asked

whether mankind had not bent too far backwards in the direction of species protection. The programme served the useful function of explaining how massive public culls had elevated animals to a status seemingly higher than that of mere people, but of course a cause is not flavoured just because it enjoys slick publicity.

Roger Payne, a marine biologist, discovered in the 1960s that whales could sing. As a result: "Suddenly one day I decided that I would spend the rest of my life trying to

do something to improve the way people look at whales." Payne has been as good as his word. But if the ability to sing automatically justified protected status, Dr O'Connor would be grade one listed.

Beyond question, the whale, with its enormous appetite, occupies an important position in the food chain. But that is not why governments have been lobbied, not to terrorise, by advocates of saving the whale (in some waters, they are threatened by over-population). The media, and not just television, put the whale on the fashion map by showing its great dignified torso and playing its haunting tunes. The food chain had nothing to do with it.

Similarly, as the programme showed, campaigns to save the tiger have skirted round the unfortunate fact that tigers eat people. When large areas of India and

Africa were turned into reservations and the hunting of tigers was banned, the increasing population of tigers killed the cattle of farmers whose tribes had occupied the land for a thousand years. But nobody launched Save the African Farmer with a gala dinner at the Dorchester. Instead, the programme reported, one million people were forced to up sticks and move somewhere else so that the protect-

ed tiger could roam (and cash-rich tourists could continue to safari).

In the West, people have more prosaic but equally important questions to resolve, such as: will my doctor do me any good? *Natural Born Healers* (Channel 4) is an interesting series about alternative medicine. Unlike alternative comedy, we can define what is an alternative to it: it is an alternative to having a GP examine you and write a prescription.

Last night the series took Roy Haggerty, a sufferer for three years from chronic fatigue syndrome, or ME, and sent him to Dr Julian Kenyan, a practitioner of complementary medicine, for a three-month course of treatment. By the end of it Roy seemed better and was able to mow his lawn, whereas before he became tired even if nobody can properly explain why the treatment works.

Roy's GP, Dr Peter May, was not very impressed with this course of action began and his

view did not appear to have changed when it ended: "So (Kenyan) is putting out wacky ideas, completely out of the blue and if he (Haggerty) gets better (Kenyan) will say they've got some basis in reality. Bizarre."

The real difference in approach is that Kenyan uses imagination in choosing a treatment whereas a GP's training is to treat demonstrable symptoms on a scientific basis. I would not presume to choose between these approaches, but if something works then it must be a legitimate treatment, even if nobody can properly explain why the treatment works.

Now that winter has finally arrived flies-on-the-wall are dying off. The latest to go by way of all such documentaries is *Dover* (ITV) which has been a fly on the wall of our busiest port these past few weeks. I missed the earlier episodes but if last night's

finale sums up the whole I can only say that it is surprising how difficult it can be to stay

**EQUESTRIANISM 44**

Showtime lights up opening day at Olympia

SPORT

FRIDAY DECEMBER 19 1997

Hollioake confident of tour de force in Champions Trophy final

England wary of Lara's threat

FROM MICHAEL HENDERSON
IN SHARJAH

ONE more river to cross, one more match to play, and England can return home for Christmas satisfied with a job well done. They must be considered favourites to beat West Indies in the final of the Champions Trophy today because they have won their three matches to get there. But it would be wise to tread carefully in case the Lara volcano discharged lava across the outfield.

In short order, England have beaten India, West Indies and Pakistan and showed that they can defend a total as well as chase one. The batting is functioning reasonably, the bowling has been disciplined, the fielding excellent and the spirit in the side is worth an extra player. They are ready for this match and will not be too disappointed that West Indies are their opponents.

Adam Hollioake, who will be confirmed as captain for the last leg of the West Indies tour sometime next week, cut a confident figure yesterday. He knows he has good men under his command who can be trusted not to fold under pressure, and knows also that the force is with England, who came here largely unheralded but who have impressed everybody with the thoroughness of their cricket.

Victory today would not prepare the ground for the tour of the West Indies, which starts next month, but it would remind people that England are not the international doormats on whom every team wipes its feet. Furthermore, if the five men who go on from this tournament to the Caribbean take with them something of the purpose and unity that has been so apparent here, England will go into the Test series feeling ten feet tall.

Hollioake thought it was "the duty of the five players who are here to take that positive thinking to the West Indies". He said: "There is no reason why the attitude we have shown here should not be carried on there." Praising the spirit in the side, he said it had been a double to lead.

England will probably field the team that has won the three matches to date, al-



David Lloyd, the England coach, watches Adam Hollioake practise before the match against West Indies today. Photograph: Ian Waldie

though Ashley Giles, the Warwickshire left-arm spinner, might get a game if a second slow bowler is required. West Indies played three spinners against India and they took all the wickets that fell to bowlers.

Pakistan fielded four against England, three of them wrist spinners. On these turning pitches, the back-of-the-hand bowler who uses the rough outside the right-hander's leg stump presents quite a challenge and West Indies have one in Rawl Lewis.

Because England have been so successful it has not proved possible to give games to Giles, Ben Hollioake or Peter Martin. "After the first match we were in a situation where we wanted to keep the same side and when we won again it

became difficult to chuck the others into the heat of battle," Adam Hollioake said. "There are no games in between to find out if they are in form or out of form, so you're better off sticking with what you know."

The captain is aware that the middle order needs to make more runs. "I've made the mistake of playing as I would do in England and I've been caught on the boundary a couple of times," he said. "I realise now that it was a mistake to attack as soon as I came in." Only Stewart, the player of the tournament, has succeeded in taking the bowlers on.

Somehow, England are finding enough runs to win, and there must be a good chance that Hick or Thorpe will explode today. They may have to, because Lara is due a big innings and, in this form of cricket, Hooper is a handy batsman.

Four successive victories by England may have been beneficial for confidence, but it was obvious that they were unprepared for the speed and intensity with which Australia play their cricket.

The dismissal of Charlotte Edwards, whose background in boys' cricket should have

Optimism of holders is shattered by Australia

NAGPUR (England won toss; Australia beat England by eight wickets)

THE ENGLAND women's team suffered a rude awakening in the World Cup yesterday when Australia dismissed them for 95 with a ruthless exhibition of the standard of play that is required if they are to harbour any hopes of retaining their world crown.

For a while, Jan Brittin and Barbara Daniels repelled the onslaught, but Brittin was bowled by Mason and Daniels gave her wicket away, pulling a long bop from Olivia Magno straight to backward square-leg.

That wicket was the start of an extraordinary spell by Magno, the leg spinner, which saw her take four wickets for ten runs in nine overs. Magno started with an attacking field of slip, gully and silly point, but so hypnotised were the players by the combination of flight and control that she was still able to dictate terms.

The dismissal of Clare Connor was indicative of England's batting. When Fitzpatrick was brought back in the 42nd over, Connor stepped away and exposed all three stumps to a straight ball. Melissa Reynolds at least showed what could be done by hitting three defiance boundaries late in the innings before holing out to mid-off.

Australia then showed the wicket held no demons by reaching their target for the loss of only two wickets, although the England bowlers gave a decent account

of themselves. Karen Smithies, the England captain, said: "We didn't really apply ourselves here. I think it would be very, very different from the last three games. It needed someone to be watchful and get used to the pace of the ball, which no one really did."

Both teams were already assured of their quarter-final places, but the result means that Australia will play in Lucknow tomorrow and England are in Chandigarh on Sunday. They will face either Sri Lanka or Holland, though it was uncertain who will play whom, because Sri Lanka and Holland finished equal on points in pool B and the organisers have yet to announce the final placings.

"Chile are clearly similar in style to Colombia and the same can be said of Saudi Arabia in comparison with Tunisia. We have other fixtures to confirm, notably in March, April and the end of May but, so far, I am pleased with the progress."

Chile will provide England's next opponents at Wembley on February 11. The South Americans, drawn against Italy, Cameroon and Austria in the finals, are likely to feature Ivan Zamorano, the Internazionale forward, and Marcelo Salas, the River Plate forward, who now looks destined to join his compatriot in Serie A after Manchester United's decision to withdraw their interest in him.

On May 23, Saudi Arabia will provide England's final opponents on home soil before they leave the country to begin their final preparations for the tournament. Saudi Arabia are in the same group as France, South Africa and Denmark.

Hoddle has yet to decide whether England will head straight from London to Morocco for a four-team tournament the following week. However, it seems increasingly likely that England's preparations will conclude with a spell in Spain or Portugal, with La Manga golf resort in Spain a possible destination.

The Football Association is in discussion with the Portuguese FA about a possible match in Lisbon.

Owen warred, page 44

Plus summoned, page 44

TOMORROW IN THE TIMES



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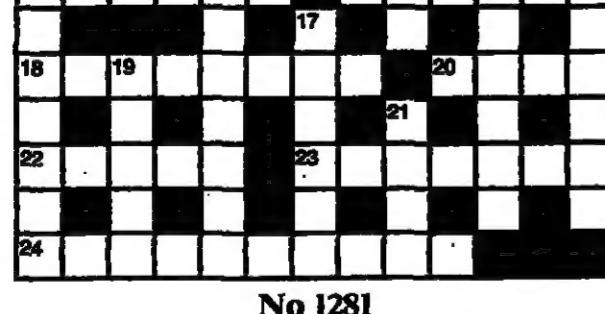
Danny Baker

BOXING 46

Hamed's backers left to wait for audience reaction



4



No 1281

ACROSS
1 Trifling fruit (10)
2 Friendly (7)
3 Film (5)
11 Show resentment (4)
12 Unmarried woman (8)
14 Constricted (6)
15 Flushed; very busy (6)
18 Naughty behaviour (8)
20 (Cap) pearls (glass) be full (4)
22 Month to be in England (Browning) (5)
23 Turbulent reception (7)
24 One keen to secede (10)
SOLUTION TO NO 1280
ACROSS: 1 Pop-up, 7 Artisan, 8 Valiant, 9 Spinach, 11 Detour, 13 Pizzicato, 15 Crocodile, 19 Engels, 21 Mattins, 23 Hurdler.
DOWN: 1 Paved, 2 Palate, 3 Play up, 4 Pats, 5 Picnic, 6 Paucity, 10 Puzzle, 12 Ridden, 14 Break up, 16 Catnap, 17 Entrap, 18 Dewlap, 20 Scrap, 22 Shop.

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Baker-Finch hits new low

John Hopkins offers sympathetic advice to the tormented 1991 Open champion

Championship this year, but because he had competed with some success in several tournaments in Queensland recently, Baker-Finch was tempted back into competition at

In the first round, Baker-Finch disqualify himself after he had played eight holes and was already six over par. Having hit two balls into water on his ninth hole, he lost his temper and railed at journalists for wanting to watch him instead of someone playing well.

"People are sick of hearing what I had," Baker-Finch said. "They want to know what the good scores are. I came here to have some fun this week and play with a mate, but you just couldn't leave me alone. I am not really well enough to play professionally. It's no fun." If golf is no fun, then the best thing to do is to stop playing. Every amateur knows that.

Coolun, near Brisbane yesterday. The Australian thought he had built up defences that were impenetrable even by the insidious imposters known as uncertainty and anxiety. He was being optimistic. If it takes time for scars on the body to heal, then it must for scars on the mind to do the same.

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